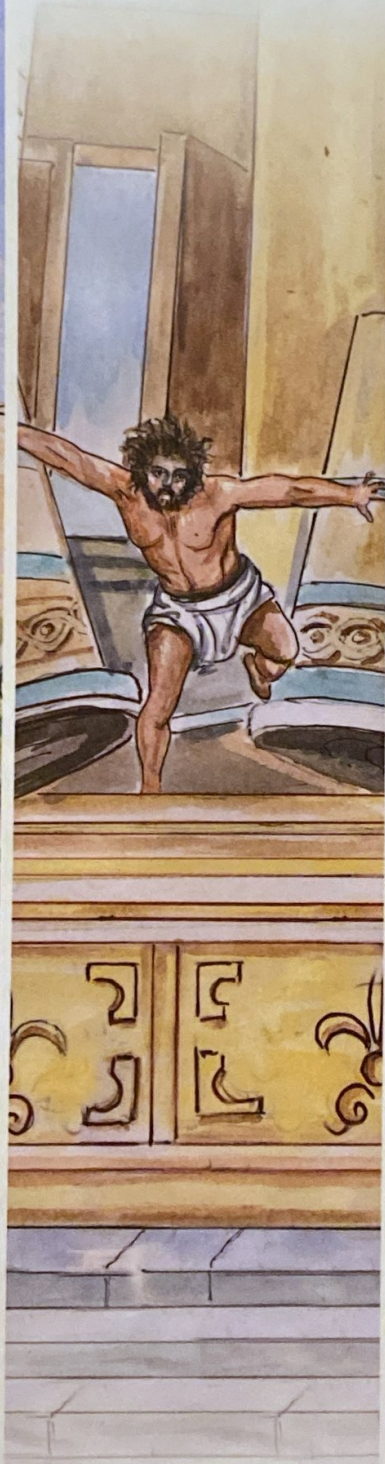


Children's **Bible** Reader



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Children's **Bible** Reader

Illustrations by Martha Kapetanakou-Xinopoulou



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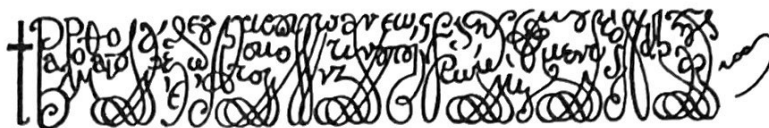
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Protocol 600/2005

To the Most Esteemed Michael Chatzigiannis, General Secretary of the Greek Bible Society, beloved spiritual son in the Lord of our Modesty, grace and peace from God.

In response to letters dated May 16 and July 4 of the past year from you, most beloved and esteemed Sir, which were submitted in reference to the publication by your Society of a children's book entitled "Children's Bible Reader," we formally state that by the decision of our Holy and Sacred Synod the usefulness of your endeavor is clearly evident, and we most eminently laud it with our paternal and Patriarchal blessings, praying that this publication will be richly laden with much fruit and that it will blossom in the ground of the pure souls of the children, and thus it will prove to be a useful tool and a springboard for the acquisition of both true earthly life as well as the Eternal Kingdom.

May the Grace of God and His endless Mercy, as well as my paternal and Patriarchal blessings be with your Esteemed Person.

April 19, 2006

Your fervent intercessor before God

✝BARTHOLOMEW

Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome,
and Ecumenical Patriarch

The Old Testament



God creates the world



In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. But the earth, however, was just a barren place. Darkness and water were everywhere. And then God said, “Let there be light!” And light appeared. God was pleased, for He saw that the light was good. He named the light ‘day’ and the darkness ‘night.’

And then God said, “Let there be a dome, the firmament, above the land to divide the waters!” So it happened. And God named this dome ‘sky.’

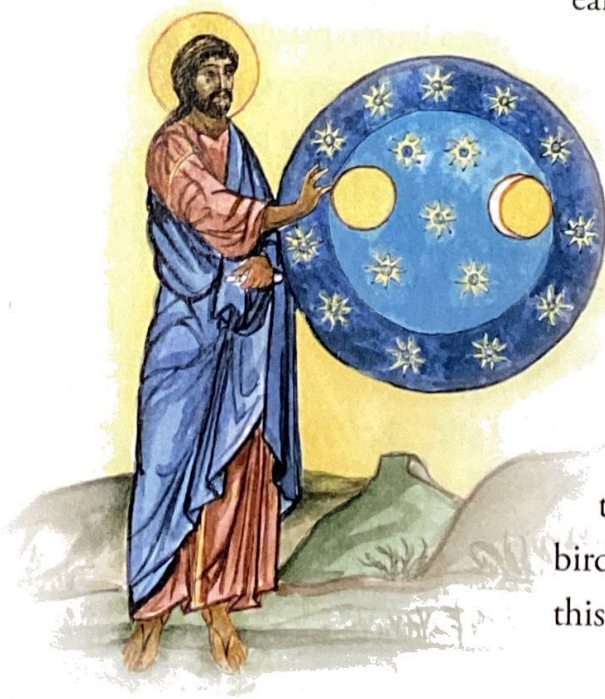
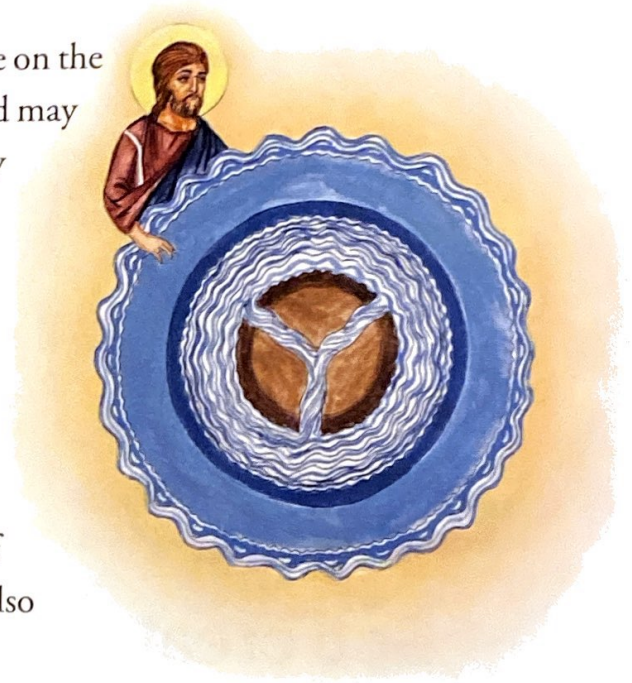
And then God said, "Let the waters that are on the land gather in one place so that the dry land may appear!" So it happened. He named the dry land 'earth' and the waters He called 'sea.' God was pleased, for this also was good.

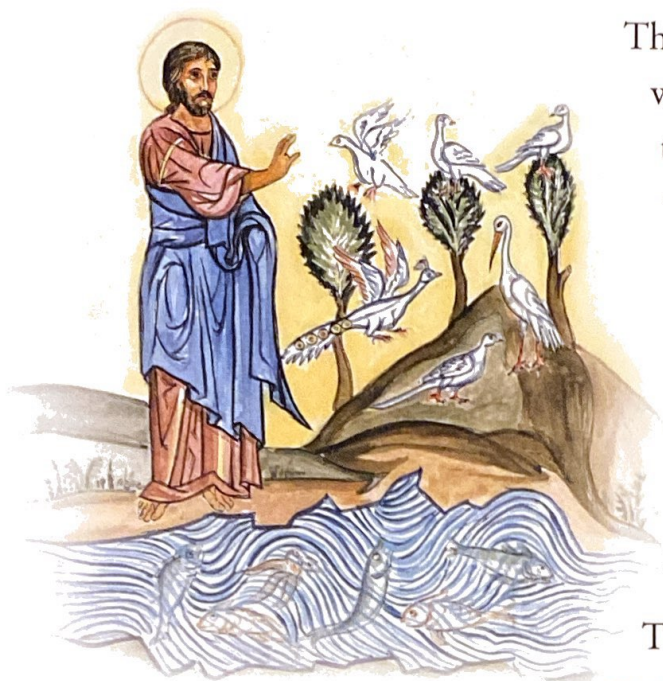
Then God said, "May the earth be filled with green plants: let there be grass and flowers and trees to blossom and bear seeds and fruit!" Then the earth produced green grass and colorful flowers and trees of every kind. And God was pleased, for this also was good.

Then God said, "Let there be lights in the sky that shed their light upon earth and separate day from night, and show the time for seasons and years!"

So He created the sun for the day and the moon and the stars for the night. God was pleased, for this also was good.

Then God said, "Let the waters and the air be filled with living creatures!" So He created the fish and all the things that live in the water, and also the birds, great and small. God was pleased, for this also was good.





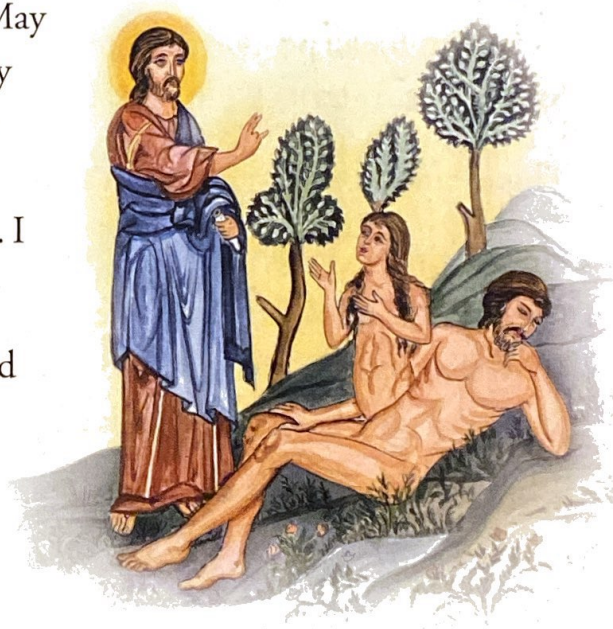
Then God said, "Let the earth be filled with living things!" So He created all the animals that live on earth: tame and wild, from the smallest to the greatest. And God was pleased, for this also was good.

And He said to all the animals that live on dry land and to the birds and to the fish, "May you become plentiful and fill all the sea and all the earth!"

Then God said, "And now I want to create a living being that is like Me. I want to create a human being." And God created human beings according to His own image; He created man and woman.

Then He blessed them and said, "May you have many children to multiply and fill the earth. You will rule over fish, birds, and all other animals. The trees and all their fruit is yours. I entrust them to your care."

God saw all that He had created and He was pleased, for it was all very good. Then God rested. And He blessed that day when He had finished making everything and





set it apart for all people to honor; so that they might rest on that day, the Sabbath, and glorify God for all His good works.

This is how God created heaven and earth.

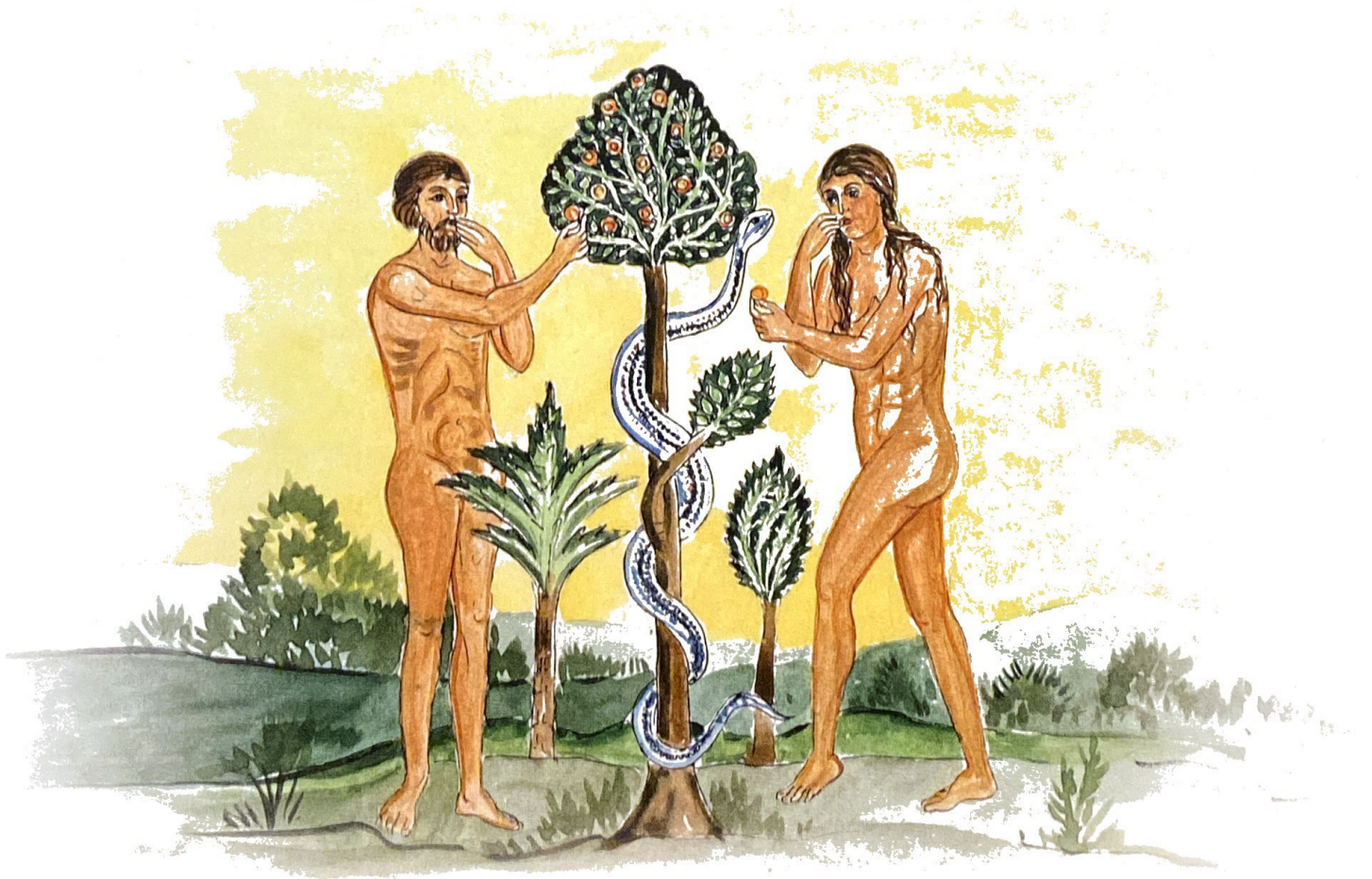
God planted a garden in a beautiful place, and He placed there Adam and Eve, the humans that He had created. The garden had beautiful trees of all kinds that bore delicious fruit. But He made one rule for the people: He ordered them not to eat the fruit of the tree which stood in the middle of the garden.

(Genesis 1-2)

Adam and Eve turn away from God

Of all the creatures God created, the snake was the most devious. The snake said to Eve, “Truly, did God say that you may not eat the fruit of the trees?” And woman replied, “We can eat fruit from all the trees except the one that stands in the middle of the garden. For God said, ‘If you eat the fruit of that tree you will die’.”

Then the snake said, “Surely not! You will not die! God knows that if you eat fruit from this tree your eyes will be opened and you will know what is good and what is bad. You will be like gods.” Eve looked at the tree: its fruit looked sweet and juicy. So she took one and ate it. She gave it to Adam and he ate as well. Then they realized that they were naked.



That evening God was walking in the garden. Adam and Eve heard Him, and they became frightened and hid so that He could not see them. God called to them and asked, "Where are you? Did you eat the fruit of the forbidden tree?" And Adam replied, "My woman gave me a fruit and I ate it!" And Eve said, "The snake tricked me and I ate it!"



Then God punished the snake by having it crawl on its belly upon the earth. To the woman He said, "You will give birth to your children in great pain." Then He said to the man, "You will have to work hard to cultivate the land in order to earn your bread."

God created clothes from animal skins for the humans. Then He sent them out of the garden and put an angel to guard the garden's gate.

(Genesis 3)



Cain and Abel

Adam and Eve's first children were Cain and Abel. Cain cultivated the land and Abel was a shepherd. One day, they both offered sacrifice to God, Cain from the fruit of the land and Abel from the best sheep of his flock.

Cain noticed that Abel's sacrifices were accepted more than his and he became jealous. One day he said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out in the fields." There Cain attacked Abel and killed him. Then he heard God's voice asking, "Where is your brother, Abel?" and Cain replied, "How should I know? Am I my brother's keeper?" But God spoke again,





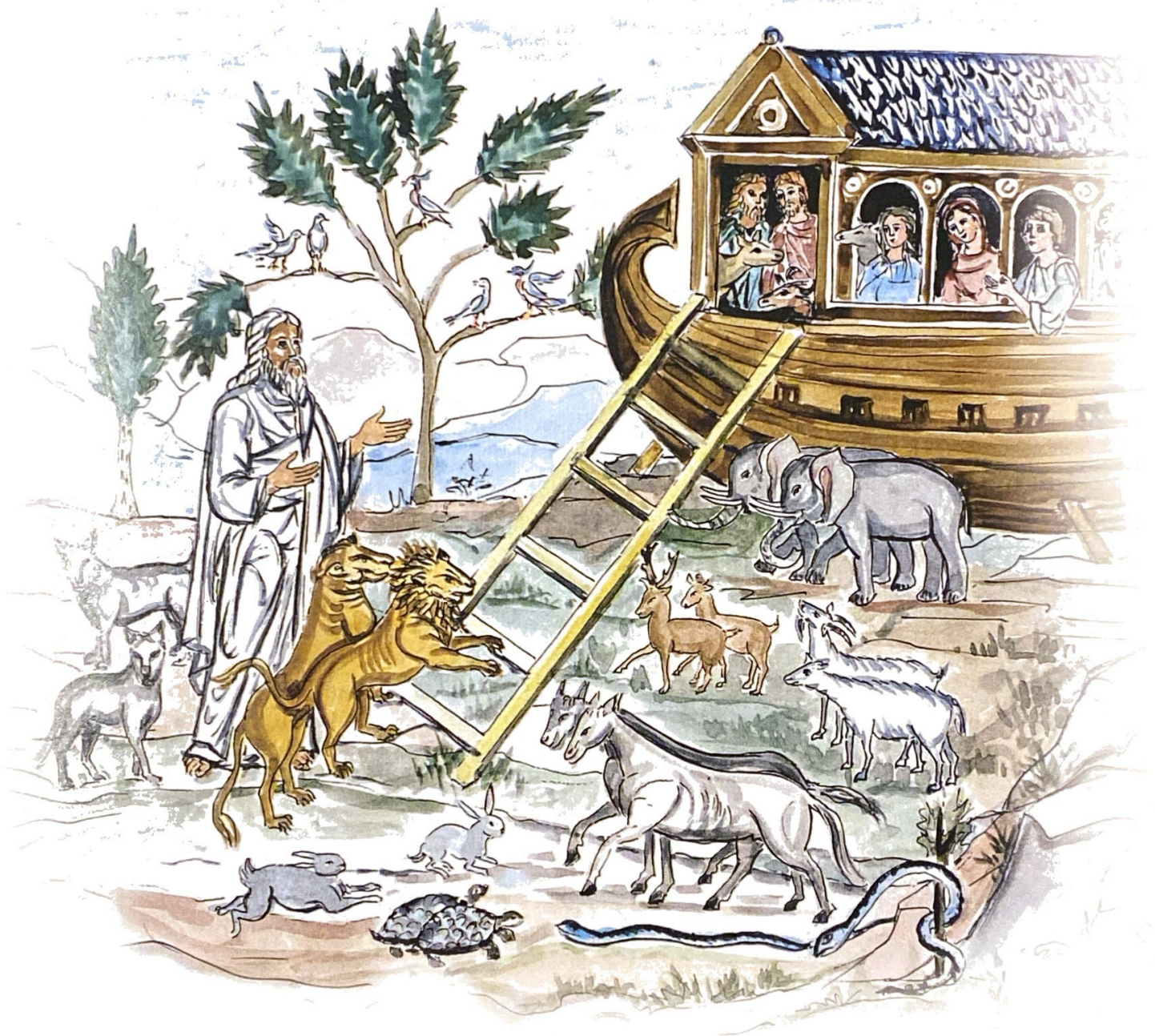
“What did you do, Cain? Your brother’s blood calls me from within the earth. And the earth that keeps his blood will curse you. You will cultivate it but it will not give you any fruit. You will have pain and hardship as long as you live.” So Cain left the land where God had spoken to him and went somewhere else to live.

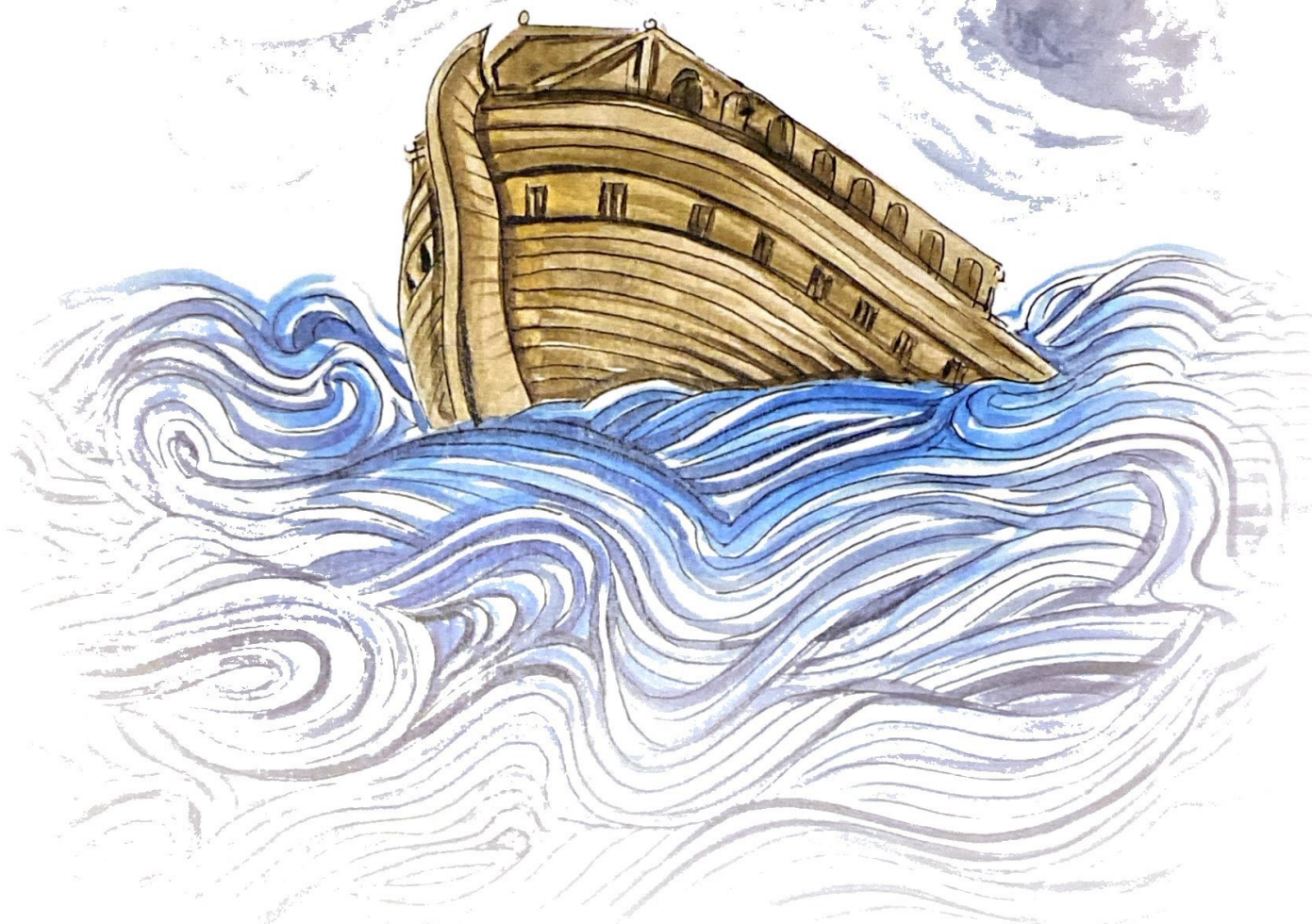
(Genesis 4)

The wickedness of people destroys the earth

People increased and spread around the earth. But they did not care about God anymore. They became evil and acted evil. Of all mankind, only a man named Noah was still honest. One day, God told him, “The end of mankind has come, because the earth is full of their crimes. For this the other people will vanish, but I will save you. Build a big wooden ship, an ark.” And Noah built the ark as God told him.

Then God said to Noah, "Get into the ark together with your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives. Take into the ark one male and one female of each kind of animal so that they also will survive." Noah did all that God had commanded him. After seven days came a rain so strong that the whole earth flooded. It rained continuously for forty days and forty nights. The water kept rising until every living creature on earth drowned.





God, however, had not forgotten Noah's family and the animals in the ark. He stopped the rain and sent a wind upon the earth so that the waters began to recede. And Noah's ark came to rest on Mount Ararat.

Noah waited for a few days and then opened a window and let a dove fly free. It came back the same evening carrying a fresh olive leaf in its mouth. Because of this, Noah knew that the water had gone down and that plants were growing again.

Then God said to Noah, "You may leave the ark now! Let all the animals out so that they will begin to multiply and spread all around the earth." Noah built an altar and offered a sacrifice to thank God.



Then God said to Noah, "I wish to make a covenant with people. I promise that there will never be another flood that will destroy the earth. Look at the rainbow in the sky. This is the sign of My covenant. When you see it you will understand and say, 'God is with us'." And people once again spread around the earth.

(Genesis 6-9)



People continue to sadden God

As people and their cities continued to grow, they decided to build something very big and impressive. They said, "Let us build a city, and a tower whose top reaches the sky, so that we will be famous." Seeing what the people had begun to build, God knew that they were full of pride and decided to stop them. As a result, He mixed up their language so that they could not understand each other. The city was called Babel, and from there the people scattered across the whole earth.

(Genesis 11)



A shepherd trusts in God

In the city of Haran in Mesopotamia, there lived a man named Abraham with his wife, Sarah. They had grown to old age without having any children. One day, God said to Abraham, “Leave your country! Leave everything behind: your home, your relatives and your friends. Go to a land that I am going to show you. You will be the father of a great nation and I will bless you.”





Abraham did as God commanded him. He took his wife Sarah and his nephew Lot and they left Haran. They took all their belongings with them, including their animals and their servants. The name of God's promised land was Canaan, and the journey to get there took a very long time. When they finally arrived there, God said to Abraham, "I will give this land to you and your descendants." Abraham then built an altar at the place where God spoke to him and thanked Him.

Abraham was very rich. He had lots of silver and gold and many sheep and goats. His nephew Lot also had many sheep and goats. Soon there was not enough pasture land for all the animals. Sometimes Abraham's shepherds argued with Lot's shepherds about the pastures. Abraham said to Lot, "We are a family! We don't need to argue, because the whole land is ours. We should divide everything. If you decide to go left I will go right, and if you decide to go right, I will go left."

Lot took a good look around. He saw the valley of the Jordan River, which had plenty of water and was very green. For this reason Lot decided to go there, while Abraham stayed in the land of Canaan. God said to Abraham, "Your descendants will be as many as the grains of sand on the beach." But Abraham said, "I do not have any children and now I am old. When will Sarah and I have a child?"

That night God said to Abraham, "Look at the sky and count the stars if you can. So shall your descendants be uncountable." Abraham trusted God and believed what He told him.

(Genesis 12-17)



Abraham and Sarah have a son

One day while Abraham was sitting at the entrance of his tent, God appeared to him in the form of three angels. It was noon when Abraham saw three men standing there. Immediately he ran to welcome them and bowed deeply. "I invite you for a meal," he said. The men thanked him and sat in the shade in front of the tent.

Abraham prepared a nice meal and Sarah baked some bread. When the meal was ready, Abraham offered it to his guests.

After eating they asked Abraham, "Where is your wife Sarah?"

He replied, "Inside the tent." Then one of the men

said, "Next year around this time I will come back and by then your wife will have a son." Sarah

heard what the man said and could not believe what she had heard! She laughed,

thinking, "But we have grown old! We cannot have children." The man heard

her and said, "Why do you laugh?

Nothing is impossible for God!"

After one year, God fulfilled His promise: Sarah gave birth to a son. He was named Isaac, which means 'laughter,' since Sarah had laughed when she heard that they would have a son.

(Genesis 18-21)



Isaac marries Rebecca

Isaac was still young when his mother Sarah died. He and Abraham were very sad. Abraham bought a field near the city of Hebron where they lived. In the field there was a cave where he buried Sarah. By the time Isaac had grown up, Abraham had become very old indeed. Then Abraham decided he should find a wife for Isaac. He sent his servant Eleazar to the land where he once lived with Sarah. Abraham had ten camels loaded with beautiful and expensive gifts and gave them to Eleazar.



When Eleazar arrived close to the town where Abraham once lived, he left the camels to rest by the well. Eleazar prayed to God, "Lord, help me find the right wife for Isaac! It is early evening and in a while the girls from the town will come to the well for water. I will then say to one of them, 'Please give me a drink of water from your jar.' If she replies, 'Drink and I will also draw water for your camels,' then I will know that this is the bride for Isaac."

Before he had even finished his prayer, a beautiful girl named Rebecca approached with a jar on her shoulder. She went to the well, filled her jar, and went on again. Then Eleazar ran towards her and said, "Please give me a drink of water from your jar." Rebecca replied, "Drink, my lord." And she willingly lowered her jar so that he could drink. Then she said, "I will also bring water for your camels, so that they may quench their thirst!"

Eleazar watched her giving water to the camels. Then he took some jewels and offered them to Rebecca. He asked her, "Is there any space at your father's home for me to sleep tonight?" Rebecca replied, "There is plenty of grass and straw at our house. There is also a place for you to sleep." At that point Eleazar thanked the Lord for hearing his prayer.

Rebecca ran back to her house. She told her family all that had happened at the well. When Eleazar arrived at their house they invited him to dinner. He said, however, "I will not eat until I tell you what I have to say." And he told them how Abraham had sent him to find a bride for Isaac and that God led him to Rebecca. Then Eleazar took out silver and gold jewelry and dresses and offered them to Rebecca. He even offered expensive gifts to her brother Laban and her mother. Then they ate together.

The next morning Eleazar said, "I have to go back to Abraham. Does Rebecca wish to come with me?" "I do," she replied. And Rebecca and her servants mounted their camels and they all departed. When they arrived at Abraham's house, Rebecca became Isaac's wife. Isaac loved her and thus was comforted in his grief for his mother.

(Genesis 24)





Two different brothers

Rebecca and Isaac had two sons. They were twins, but from birth the two brothers were totally different. The first one was named Esau. He had a lot of red hair. The second one was named Jacob. Jacob was born holding tight to his brother's heel.

The children grew older. Esau became a very good hunter. He enjoyed going out in the woods and the fields to hunt. Isaac loved his son Esau dearly.

Jacob was quieter and he enjoyed staying in the tent. He became a shepherd and took care of the sheep and goats. Jacob was Rebecca's favorite. God had said before their birth, "The elder son will serve the younger."

One day, Esau came back to the tent very tired and hungry. Jacob had just cooked some lentils. Esau then said to his brother, "Please let me have some of this food, for I am exhausted." Jacob then replied, "Sell me your



rights as the firstborn son.” Esau said, “I am starving! I do not care about these rights.” Jacob said, “Swear this to me right now!” Esau did so and then Jacob gave him some bread and lentils. So Esau sold his rights as firstborn son for some lentils, and all his father had now belonged to Jacob.

Isaac had grown so old by this time that his eyes were weak and he could hardly see. One day he called for Esau and said to him, “I have grown old and I think I will die soon. Take your hunting weapons and go and fetch me some meat. Prepare a nice meal for me, and after I eat I will give you my blessing before I die.”

Rebecca heard what Isaac said to his son Esau and remembered that God had told her, “The elder son will serve the younger.” She then called for Jacob and said, “Pay attention to me carefully and do as I say. Go to the flock and bring to me two baby goats. I will cook them for your father the way he likes them. You will take them to him and he will eat them, and give you his blessing before he dies.”

Jacob said, “My father will know that I am not Esau. He is hairy and I am not.” Then Rebecca took the skin of the goats and wrapped it around Isaac’s arms and neck so that he felt hairy.

Jacob took the meal to his father. Isaac asked, “Who is this?” and Jacob said, “It is I, Esau, your son.” Isaac doubted this so he reached out and touched his arm and said, “The voice might be Jacob’s but the arms feel like Esau’s.” After Isaac ate the meal, he placed his hands on Jacob and said, “I give you my blessing! May the land that God promised to my father Abraham belong to you. May God give you plenty of wheat and wine. You will be the master and your brother will be the servant.”



As soon as Jacob left, Esau returned from hunting. He prepared a nice meal, brought it to his father and said, “Father, bless me!”

Then Isaac recognized Esau’s voice, and he became upset and said, “If you are Esau, then I have just given my blessing to your brother Jacob! I cannot take it back now.” Esau was very angry with his brother Jacob and wanted to kill him. When Rebecca heard this, she told Jacob, “Go to your Uncle Laban in the town of Haran. Stay there until your brother’s anger cools down.”

(Genesis 25-27)

Jacob has a strange dream

Jacob walked until it became dark and then looked for a place to sleep. That night, he had a dream: he saw a ladder standing on the ground with its top reaching heaven. God's angels were climbing up and down the ladder. God stood at the top and said to him, "I am the Lord, the God of your fathers, Abraham and Isaac. This land upon which you lie will belong to you and your descendants. They will be as numerous as the specks of dust on the earth. I will be with you and protect you wherever you go."

Jacob was frightened when he woke up and said, "Truly the Lord abides in this place! Here is the gate to heaven! When I return this place will be dedicated to the worship of the Lord." He named the place Bethel, which means 'the house of God.'

(Genesis 28)



Jacob marries Rachel

Jacob reached the land where his Uncle Laban lived. Close to the town of Haran, there was a well that had a large stone covering the opening. By the well were many sheep waiting to drink. When Jacob saw this he asked the young women who herded the sheep, "Why don't you give the sheep some water?" The young women replied, "The stone covering the well is too heavy for us to lift. We must wait until the other shepherds who are young men arrive." They also said that they came from Haran and knew Laban, his uncle.



As a young girl
approached with her
flock the shepherds
said, "This is Laban's
daughter, Rachel,
coming towards us."
When Jacob saw
Rachel, he went to
the well, lifted off
the heavy stone by
himself, and gave
water to Rachel's flock.



Jacob greeted Rachel
with great joy and said,
"I am Jacob, the son
of Rebecca. We are relatives!" Rachel ran quickly back to the house and
told her father that Rebecca's son had arrived. Laban was very happy with
Jacob's visit and invited him to stay with them.

Jacob fell in love with Rachel and said to his uncle, "Give me your daughter
Rachel for my wife and for seven years I will work for you." And Laban
agreed. The seven years passed quickly for Jacob, because he was near
Rachel, whom he loved. When the time came, Laban invited many people
for the wedding feast. The bride was wearing a beautiful dress with a veil
so long and thick that Jacob could not see her face.



The next morning Jacob saw that the bride was not Rachel, but Leah, her elder sister. He was very angry and went to Laban and said, "I have worked seven years for you so that I could have Rachel as my wife. Why did you trick me?" Laban replied, "It is not the custom here to let the younger sister get married first. You can marry Rachel also! But you will have to work for me for seven more years." So Jacob did what Laban told him. He married Rachel and worked seven more years for Laban. Leah gave birth to many children. Rachel was sad because for a many years she did not have a child. Finally the Lord gave her a son whom she named Joseph.

(Genesis 29-30)

Jacob leaves Laban

Jacob worked for Laban for a long time. Laban became rich because every job that Jacob did was a success. When Jacob was working with the sheep and goats, they had many young ones which grew strong and healthy. Jacob had his own flock. He had agreed with Laban that from all the newborn animals Laban would keep the black ones and the white ones, and Jacob would keep the spotted ones. In this way, Jacob became rich, too.





After awhile, Laban and his sons became jealous of Jacob because he was so wealthy. They said angrily, "Whatever Jacob owns is actually ours. He took it from us!" For this reason Jacob decided to leave Laban in secret. He placed Leah, Rachel, and the children on the camels, took all his flocks and his belongings, and decided to go back to Canaan, his homeland.

Three days later Laban learned that Jacob and his family had left. He quickly followed their path and caught up to them. Laban said to Jacob, "Why are you secretly taking my daughters and grandchildren away from me?" Jacob replied, "Why do you treat me like a thief? I have worked for you for twenty years. You became rich because of me. If God did not help me, I would still be poor today!" Laban remembered that during the night God had appeared to him in a dream and had told him, "Beware! Do not dare to harm Jacob!" For this reason Laban said, "Let's not argue. Let us come to an agreement."

Laban and Jacob made a solemn promise between them. “We wish to keep peace,” they said. Then they all ate and drank together. The next morning Laban kissed his daughters and grandchildren and blessed them. Then he turned back to his home.

Jacob and his family continued their journey. As they approached Canaan, Jacob worried whether his brother Esau was still angry with him. Jacob prayed to God and decided, “I will give Esau a large gift.” He set aside four hundred sheep and goats for his brother, and also camels, cattle, and donkeys. Jacob sent his servants and the animals ahead of him. When the servants met Esau, they had instructions to deliver the animals to him and say, “These are a present from your brother Jacob!” Jacob thought that perhaps this way his brother would accept his return.

(Genesis 30-32)

Jacob wrestles with God

That night Jacob and his family reached the Jabbok River. After helping the women and the children cross the river with all their belongings, Jacob stayed behind.

Then a man came and wrestled with Jacob all night long, but he could not win.



When morning came, the man struck Jacob on the hip so hard that it was put out of joint. And the man said, "Let me go; daylight is coming." But Jacob replied, "I won't unless you bless me." Then he asked, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he replied. "Your name," he said, "will no longer be Jacob but Israel, for you have struggled with God and with men, and you have won." The sun rose as Jacob crossed the river.

Together with his family, he continued the journey, but from then on he walked with a limp because of his injured hip.

(Genesis 32)

The two brothers reconcile

Esau approached with four hundred men. When Jacob saw him, he placed the servants with their children at the front, then Leah with her children, and then Rachel with Joseph. Jacob went to the front and bowed down to the ground seven times before approaching his brother. Then Esau ran to meet him and they embraced. They both cried with joy. Esau was no longer angry with Jacob, and after all these years, Jacob was back in his homeland together with his family.

(Genesis 33)



Joseph and his brothers

Rachel and Jacob had another son named Benjamin. Rachel died during childbirth and Jacob was very sad. However, he had her two sons, Joseph and Benjamin, whom he dearly loved because they reminded him of Rachel.

Jacob had twelve sons in all, but he loved Joseph best. When Joseph was seventeen, Jacob gave him a beautiful coat of many colors. When his brothers saw that their father loved him the most, they became jealous and angry. One day Joseph had a dream and he described it to his brothers. “We were tying up sheaves of wheat in the fields. Suddenly my sheaf stood up straight and your sheaves surrounded it and bowed down to it.”





Then his brothers told him, “Do you think you are going to be a king and rule over us?” They hated him even more because of this. Then Joseph had another dream. “The sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.” He described this dream not only to his brothers but also to his father. Jacob scolded him, saying, “What is the meaning of this dream that you saw? Do you think that I, your mother, and your brothers will fall down on earth and bow to you?”

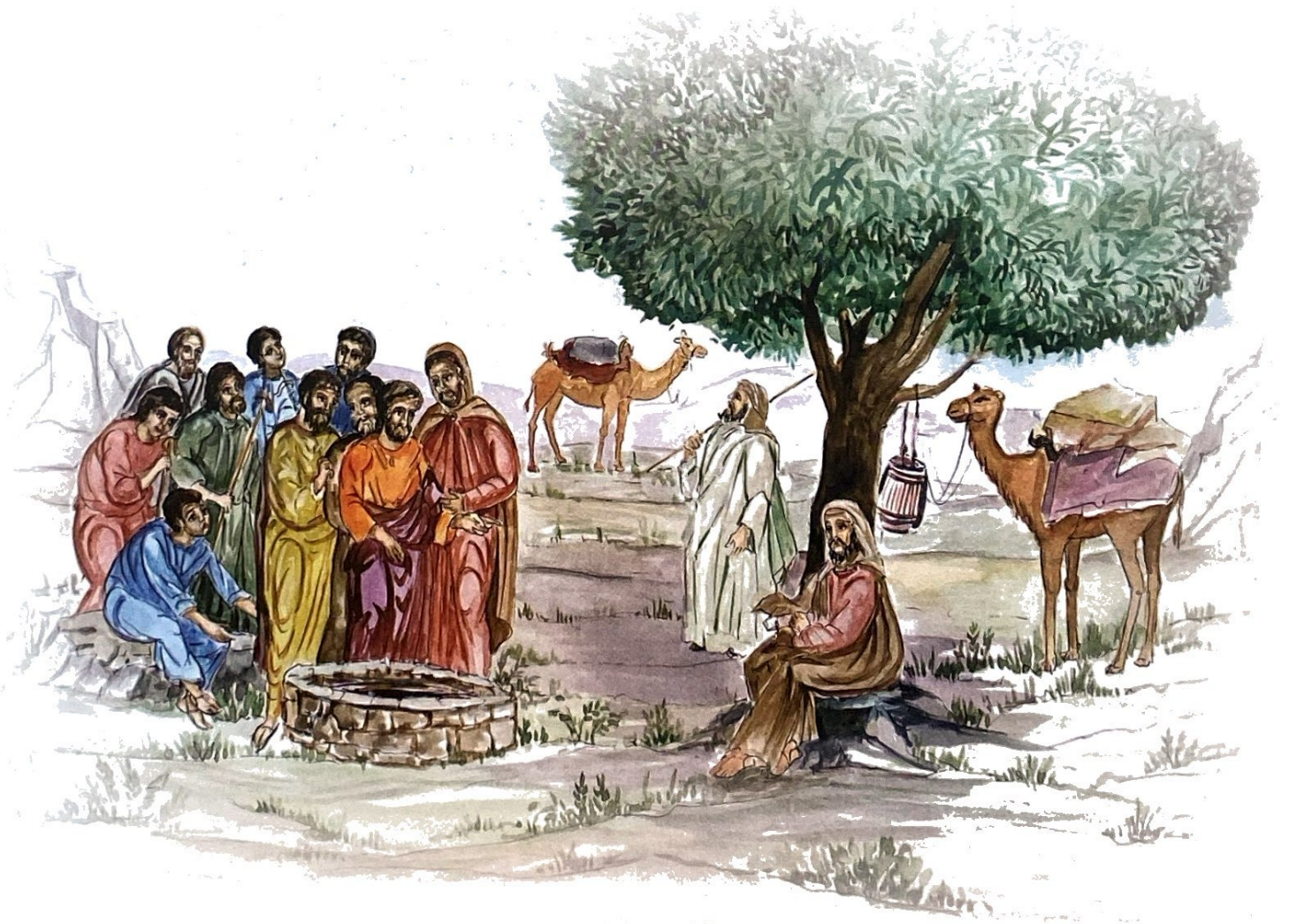
Joseph’s brothers became even more jealous, and his father kept the dreams in mind.

(Genesis 35-37)

Joseph is sold by his brothers

One day Joseph was in the house alone with his father and his brother Benjamin. All of his other brothers had gone to take care of their father's flock.

Jacob said to Joseph, "Go to your brothers and see if all is well and bring me back any news." When his brothers saw him coming from a distance they said, "Here comes the dreamer. Let's kill him and throw his body in a dry well. Then we will say that a wild beast devoured him. And then we will see what will become of his dreams!"



Reuben, his elder brother, wanted to save Joseph and said, "Let's not kill him and spill his blood. Let's just throw him down into the dry well." He said this, planning to rescue Joseph later. When Joseph reached his brothers, they ripped off his wonderful coat of many colors and threw him in the well. Then they had a meal. At this time, they saw a group of merchants and decided to sell Joseph as a slave. They took twenty silver coins from the merchants and handed over Joseph.

Reuben was not there when this happened. When he returned and went to the well to free Joseph, he was no longer there. Reuben became very upset and did not know what to do. He went to his brothers and told them, "The boy is not there! What will I say to our father?" The rest of the brothers had a plan: they slaughtered a goat and smeared Joseph's coat with its blood to make it appear that a wild animal had killed Joseph and eaten him. When they returned home, they showed the bloody coat to their father. Jacob immediately recognized it and screamed, "My son's coat! Some wild animal must have killed him. My son Joseph has been torn to pieces!" Jacob cried continually and his sorrow was unbearable. He said, "I can never be happy now that Joseph has died. The only thing I wish for is to die as well!" Nobody could comfort him.

(Genesis 37)

Joseph arrives in Egypt

Meanwhile, the merchants took Joseph to faraway Egypt, where Pharaoh was king, and there they sold him to an officer of Pharaoh named Potiphar. Joseph worked hard for Potiphar, who soon realized that Joseph was favored by God. With the Lord's help, every task that Joseph undertook was a success. Because of this, Potiphar trusted him with everything he had. Joseph took care of everything very well. On account of Joseph, God had blessed Potiphar and his household. Because Joseph was very handsome, Potiphar's wife fell in love with him, but Joseph did not show her any interest. This made her furious.

She cried out urgently, "Come quick! Joseph is trying to harm me!" She told her husband bad things about Joseph. They were all lies, but Potiphar trusted his wife and became angry with Joseph. So he gave the order to throw Joseph into prison.

Even in prison God helped Joseph. The guards soon understood that Joseph could be trusted, so he was put in charge of everything, and again everything Joseph did was a success.

(Genesis 39)





Joseph interprets dreams

Pharaoh's chief baker and wine steward were also in prison because Pharaoh was angry with them. One day Joseph saw that they were both upset and asked, "Why do you look so worried?" They replied, "We both saw strange dreams and have nobody to interpret them." Joseph said, "Only the Lord knows what dreams mean. However, tell me your dreams."

The wine steward and the chief baker told their dreams to Joseph. The first one had seen a vine with three branches heavy with ripe grapes. He squeezed the grapes in Pharaoh's cup and offered it to him. The baker dreamed that he was carrying three baskets of bread but that birds came along and ate the bread from the top basket. Joseph understood their meaning. He said to the wine steward, "In three days you will be free!" and to the baker he said, "In three days you will be executed!"

So it happened: three days later the wine steward was set free while the chief baker was killed. The wine steward returned to his post as Pharaoh's servant and promised Joseph that he would speak to Pharaoh on his behalf. However, he soon forgot his promise, and Joseph remained in prison.

(Genesis 40)

Joseph and Pharaoh

Two years later, Pharaoh had a strange dream: he was standing by the river Nile when seven cows, fat and sleek, came up and started to eat the grass. Then seven other cows, thin and bony, arrived. The thin cows ate the fat cows. Pharaoh could not tell what this dream meant. The next morning he sent immediately for all the wise men. None of them, however, could explain his dream either. Then the wine steward remembered that Joseph could interpret dreams, and said to Pharaoh, “While I was in prison, I had a strange dream. A foreign man, Joseph, was there and he interpreted my dream. Things turned out just as he had said.”



Immediately Pharaoh sent for Joseph. They took him out of prison, dressed him properly, and presented him to Pharaoh, who said, “I had a dream but nobody could interpret it for me. I have heard that you have the power to interpret dreams.” Joseph replied, “I myself do not have this power. God has it. He tells me what the dreams mean.”

Then Pharaoh told of his dream with the seven fat and seven thin cows and Joseph listened carefully. Then he said to Pharaoh, “Your dream has been sent by God, and He has told me what it means. The seven fat cows are seven years of great abundance. Plenty of wheat will grow in Egypt, more than people can eat. The seven thin cows are seven years of famine.

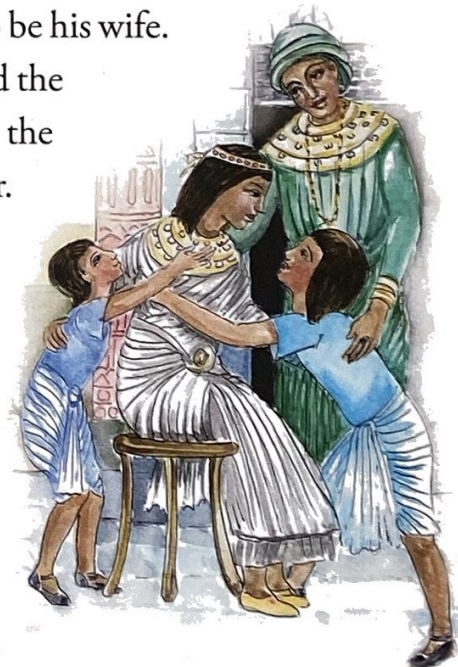


For seven years there will be no wheat. People will have nothing to eat and will starve to death. So Pharaoh should find a wise man and appoint him as governor of all Egypt. He should plan to save as much wheat as possible during the years of abundance in large warehouses, to keep it for the seven years of famine that will follow. Then it can be distributed to the people so that they will not die of hunger.”

This proposal seemed good to Pharaoh and he thought, “God is with Joseph. I will not find anyone better for this task.” And so he said to Joseph, “No one is smarter and wiser than you. Your God shows you what you should do. You will manage this task. You will be my deputy: all the people of Egypt will obey your commands.” The king removed a ring from his finger and put it on Joseph’s finger. He dressed him with a bright robe, and put a golden necklace on him. Pharaoh also gave his own chariot to Joseph, and with it he traveled throughout the land.

The seven years of abundance arrived. There was a huge harvest of wheat. Joseph ordered large storehouses to be built and collected the crops in them. Pharaoh gave him Asenath, an Egyptian girl, to be his wife. They had two sons: the first was named Manasseh and the second one, Ephraim. A year after Ephraim was born, the seven years of famine began. The crops were very poor. In every land people were starving, but in Egypt there was plenty of food. The storehouses built by Joseph were full, and people from all over came to Egypt to buy wheat.

(Genesis 41)

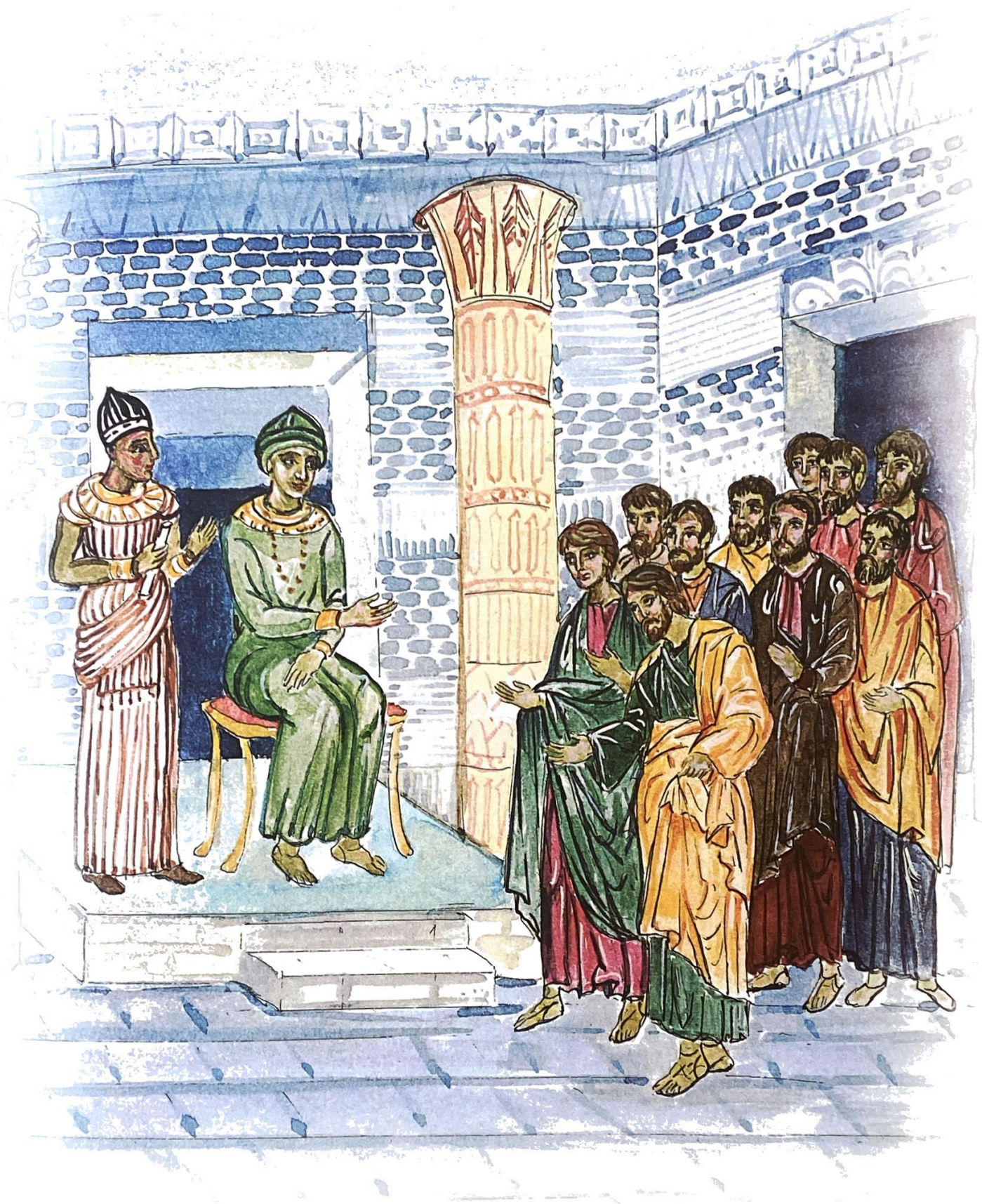


Joseph's brothers come to Egypt

In Canaan, the people were suffering from the famine, too. Jacob said to his sons, "I have heard that there is plenty of wheat in Egypt. Go there and buy some for all of us so that we will not starve!" Only Benjamin, the youngest, stayed behind with his father.

Joseph had great power in Egypt; everyone who wished to buy wheat had to appear before him. When his brothers approached, he recognized them at once but did not identify himself. He spoke in Egyptian and the interpreter translated for him. "Where have you come from?" he asked them. Joseph's brothers did not recognize him. They replied, "We have come from Canaan to buy food." Then Joseph said, "You are spies! You came here to explore the land so you can attack!" "No, no, sir!" they shouted, "we are honest people. We are twelve brothers. The youngest one is still with our father and one is dead."

Joseph, however, wanted to test his brothers. "What I say is true. You are spies!" he shouted. And he put them in prison for three days. On the third day he said to them, "This is what you have to do in order to live, for I am a person who fears God: one of you will be left here in prison and the rest will go and get your younger brother. In this way you will prove that you are telling the truth."



Then the brothers said to each other, "This is our punishment for what we did to Joseph. We saw his agony when he was begging us, but we did not listen. This is why we are in trouble now." Reuben said, "Didn't I tell you not to hurt him? But you did not listen, and now the time of punishment has arrived." They did not know that Joseph could understand everything they were saying. He left the room and cried and then came back and spoke to them. He seized Simeon and had him chained.

Joseph ordered his brothers' packs to be filled with wheat, and gave them food for the journey. He also told the servants to take the money they spent on the wheat and hide it in the packs. The brothers loaded their donkeys and left.

(Genesis 42)

Joseph's brothers return to Canaan

In the evening, the brothers stopped to camp overnight. One of them went to feed his donkey and when he opened his pack he saw the money. "My money was returned!" he said to his brothers. They were very surprised and said to each other, "What did God do to us?" When they arrived in Canaan, they went to their father Jacob and told him the whole story. Then they said, "The man who governs Egypt spoke harshly to



us and accused us of being spies. He did not believe that we are honest people. He wants us to bring Benjamin to Egypt, and Simeon has to stay in prison until we return with him. He gave us our packs and sent the nine of us back.” They showed their father the loads of wheat. When they opened them they found all the money. They were really frightened and said, “Now he is really going to think that we are thieves!”



Jacob said, "You keep taking away my children. Joseph is dead. Simeon is not here. And now you want to take Benjamin?" Then Reuben said to his father, "I promise that Benjamin will come back to you." But Jacob said, "No. I will not let Benjamin come with you! I am too old. If something bad happens to him, I will die!" When the family ran out of the wheat that was brought from Egypt, Jacob again told them, "Go back and buy food for us." Judas, one of the brothers, then replied, "That man in Egypt warned us not face him again unless we have Benjamin with us." Then Jacob said, "Why did you tell that man that you have one more brother?" They replied, "Because he kept asking about us and our family. He asked if our father was still alive, and if we had any other brothers." The brothers said to Jacob, "How could we know that he would ask us to bring our brother to him?"

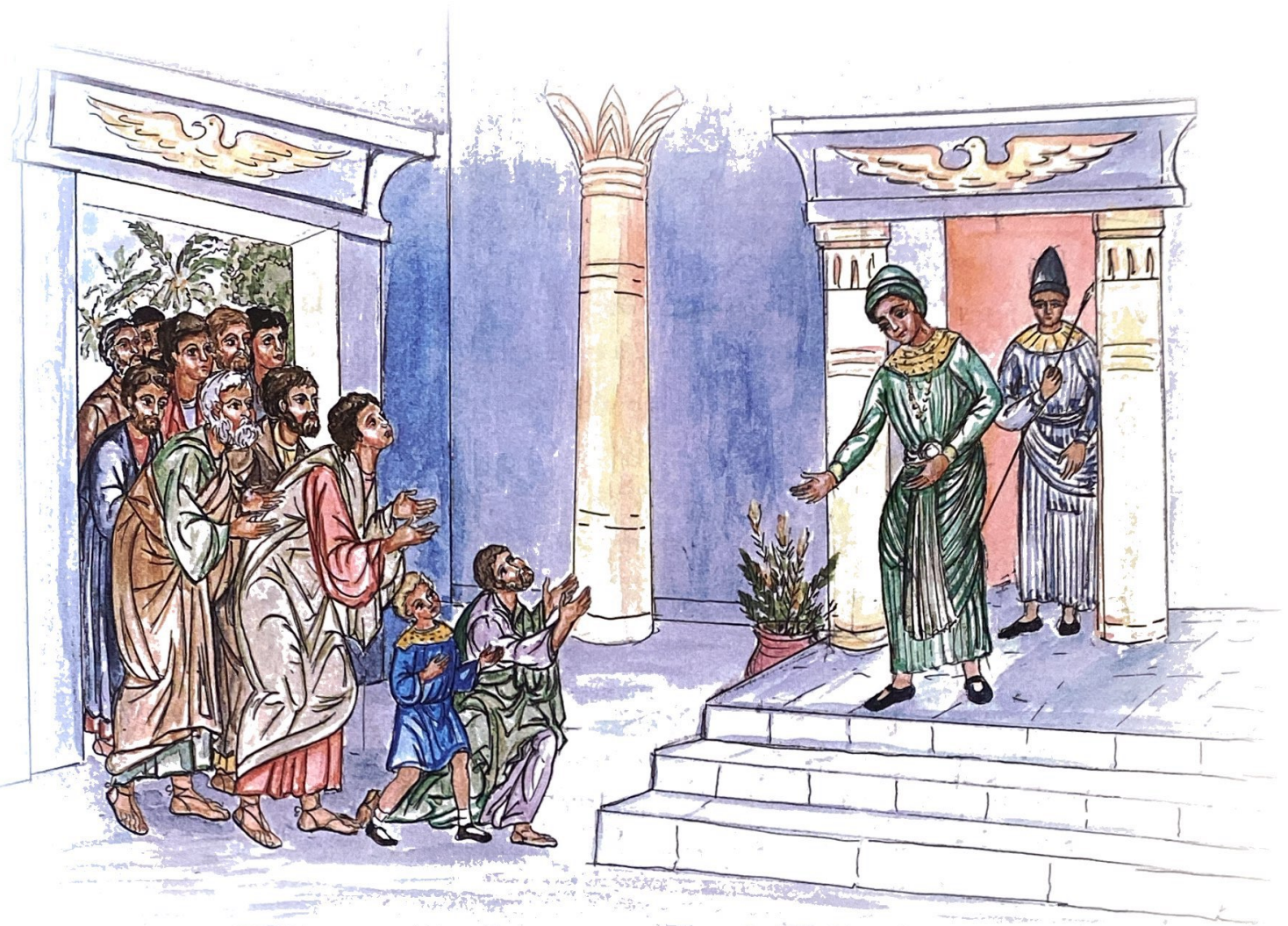
Then Judas promised his father, "Benjamin will return to you." So Jacob said, "Since we have to do this, we will. Take presents to give to this man in Egypt: honey, perfumes, peanuts, and almonds. Take double the money as well, so that you can return the money you found in your packs. Perhaps there was some mistake. I will pray that the Lord Almighty will help you and that you will all safely return."

(Genesis 42-43)

Joseph welcomes his brothers

The brothers started their journey for Egypt, taking with them the gifts, the money, and Benjamin. When Joseph saw that they had brought Benjamin, he said to the chief servant of his house, "Take these people to my house and feed them well, because they are my guests today." When the brothers were led to Joseph's house they got scared and said, "The money that we found in our packs is the reason why we were brought here. They want to accuse us and attack us and take our belongings and keep us as slaves."

They approached the chief servant of Joseph's house and said, "Please, Sir, we have come again to buy food. Last time, when we reached our campsite and we opened our packs, we found this money. We brought it all back with us. We also brought more money to buy food again." He said, "Calm down and do not fear. God has placed the money in your packs. It is yours." And he brought Simeon to them from prison. The man led them into the house and gave them water to wash their feet and also food for their animals. They spent time organizing all the gifts until Joseph arrived to have lunch with them.



When they saw Joseph, they offered him the presents and bowed to him. He asked them how they were and then he said, "How is your old father? Is he still alive?" They replied, "Our father is all right. He is still alive." And they again bowed to Joseph. When Joseph saw Benjamin, the other son of his mother, he asked, "Is this your younger brother? May the Lord bless you, my child," he said. He was deeply touched by seeing Benjamin and went to his private room and wept. Then he washed his face, returned to the room, and ordered the meal to begin. They all ate and drank together and were happy and in good spirits.

(Genesis 43)

The silver cup

As the brothers prepared to leave, Joseph gave orders to the chief servant of his house. "Fill up the packs of these people with food. Put their money into their packs again. Hide my silver cup in the youngest one's pack." At sunrise, the brothers started on their journey home. They left the city, but before they got very far, Joseph said to his chief servant, "Go after these people and stop them. Ask them for my silver cup." The man caught up to them and asked, "Why did you steal my lord's silver cup?" They replied, "How could we do such a thing? We have already returned the money that we found in our packs; we would not then steal silver or gold from your lord's house."

The servant said, "All right. I will search the packs. If the silver cup is found, the person who has that pack will become a slave and the others will go free." They all agreed. They let down their packs and opened them. The servant inspected each one, beginning with the oldest brother and ending with the youngest one. The cup was found in Benjamin's bag. The brothers were very upset. What could they do? They loaded their animals again and went back to the city. They went to Joseph and bowed to him. And Joseph asked them, "How could you do such a thing? Didn't you think that I would figure out what happened?" Judas replied, "Please, sir. Listen to me and do not get upset. The last time you asked us about our father and our brother. You ordered us to bring along our youngest brother. Our old father did not want us to bring him. We had to promise

that we would definitely bring Benjamin back. If we return without him, our father will die of grief! Let Benjamin go! I will stay instead of him. I will be your slave. How can I return to my father without him? I would rather stay myself than see his sorrow.” Joseph then saw that his brothers were not ruthless any more.

(Genesis 44)

Joseph forgives his brothers

Joseph could not pretend any more. He sent everybody out of the room except his brothers. Then he cried out loudly, “I am Joseph.” His brothers could not say a word, they were so stunned.

“Come closer,” he said. “It is I, Joseph, your brother whom you sold into slavery. But do not be afraid, I am not angry any more. The Lord has sent me here to Egypt to save your lives. Two years of famine have passed and there will be five more. You meant to hurt me, but God had different plans for me. He made me governor of all Egypt, a counsellor to Pharaoh, and the one in charge of his palace. Now hurry, go back to our father and bring him here. Bring all of your wives and children here to Egypt. I will take care of you.”



Joseph gave his brothers nice clothes and filled their carts with food. He sent ten donkeys loaded with gifts for his father. He said farewell to his brothers and asked them not to argue on their journey. They returned to their father and said, "Joseph is still alive! He is the one who governs all of Egypt." But Jacob did not believe them. They told him everything that had happened, and also showed him the presents that Joseph had sent. Jacob was pleased and said, "It is enough to know that Joseph, my child, is still alive. I will go to Egypt to see him before I die." Jacob and all his family began their journey to Egypt, and they took all their belongings with them.

When Joseph heard that his father was at the border of Egypt, he took his chariot and went to meet him. When Jacob saw Joseph, he hugged him and wept in his arms. "Now I can die," Jacob said, "since I have seen that you are still alive."

Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am going to tell Pharaoh that you have come. I will say that you are shepherds who have come with their herds. This way you will be able to stay here." And Pharaoh allowed Joseph's family to live in Egypt.

(Genesis 45-47)



The people of Israel suffer in Egypt

After many years Joseph and his brothers died, but from their children and grandchildren a whole nation was formed. This nation was called Israel. All the Israelites were descendants of Jacob, whom God had named Israel. Much later, a new Pharaoh ascended to the throne who didn't know of Joseph and his family. So he said to his people, "There are more and more of these Israelites. Soon they will be stronger than we are and they will rule us!" So Pharaoh forced the Israelites into slavery. He thought, "This way we can control them." The Israelites were forced to make mud bricks and build large cities for Pharaoh.

This was not enough for Pharaoh. So he ordered that every boy born to the Israelites would be thrown into the Nile to die, but the girls were allowed to live. He did this because he was afraid that the men would multiply greatly and make war against the Egyptians.

(Exodus 1)



A mother saves her son

Life was very hard for the Israelites. All the parents were in fear when a boy was born to them. There was an Israelite family who already had a son and a daughter who were named Aaron and Miriam. One day a third child was born to the family, a handsome boy. The mother was very upset. She did not want to have her child killed, so she kept him hidden. But the child grew and he could no longer be hidden. So his mother took a basket, placed the boy inside, and left him at the edge of the river. She asked Miriam to keep watch and tell her what happened.

That day, Pharaoh's daughter came to the Nile together with her servants to bathe. She saw the basket and sent one of her maidens to bring it to her. When she uncovered it and saw the baby boy crying inside, she felt sorry for him and said, "It is a young Israelite." Then Miriam, the boy's sister, came forward and said to Pharaoh's daughter, "I know an Israelite woman who can nurse this baby. Should I bring her to you?" Pharaoh's daughter said, "Go." So the girl went and brought back the child's mother. "Take this boy," Pharaoh's daughter said, "and feed him for me, and I will pay you." So the mother took her own child home with her. When the child grew up she took him back to Pharaoh's daughter, who adopted him and named him Moses.

(Exodus 2)

Moses must leave

Moses grew to manhood in the palace. One day he went to see his people, the Israelites. They were forced to work hard as slaves. When he saw an Egyptian whipping an Israelite, he killed the Egyptian when no one was looking and hid his body in the sand. After that he was afraid for his own life, so Moses left Egypt and went to Midian. He stayed with Jethro, who was a priest there. Jethro had a daughter named Zipporah, whom Moses married. He worked for Jethro as a shepherd and herdsman and they stayed in Midian for a long time. During this time Pharaoh died, but the Israelites were still slaves. They prayed to God for help, and God heard their prayers.

(Exodus 2-3)

God calls Moses

One day, Moses came along with his herd to Mount Horeb. There the Lord appeared to him as the flame of a burning bush. Moses noticed that although the bush was on fire, it was not being consumed. So he thought, "I should investigate this strange thing. Why isn't the bush burning?" When God saw that Moses was approaching, He said from the bush, "Moses, Moses." He replied, "Yes." "Do not come any closer," said God. "Take off your sandals, for this ground is holy. I am the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." Then Moses covered his face because he was afraid to look at God.



God continued, "I have seen the trouble of My people in Egypt, and I have heard their cry. I know what they are going through. This is why I am here, to deliver them from the Egyptians and lead them to a land that is large and good. Go to Pharaoh and tell him to let My people go." Moses said to God, "Who am I to go to Pharaoh and lead the Israelites out of Egypt?" Then God promised him, "I will be with you and I will help you." But Moses said, "All right, I will go to the Israelites and tell them that the God of their ancestors sent me to them. But they will ask me what Your name is. What will I say?" Then God said to Moses, "I Am Who I Am. Tell the Israelites, 'I AM has sent me to you'."

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Throw to the ground that staff you are holding in your hand." So Moses did, and the staff turned into a snake. Moses was afraid and tried to run away. But God told him, "Pick it up by the tail!" Moses picked it up and it turned back into his staff. Then God said to Moses, "Show this miracle to the Israelites and they will believe you." Moses was still hesitant and said to God, "I have never been a good speaker. I am slow and I stutter. Nobody will listen to me." Then God told him, "Your brother Aaron will help you. I know that he has a gift with words. I will be with you and I will tell you what you should do and say."

(Exodus 3-4)

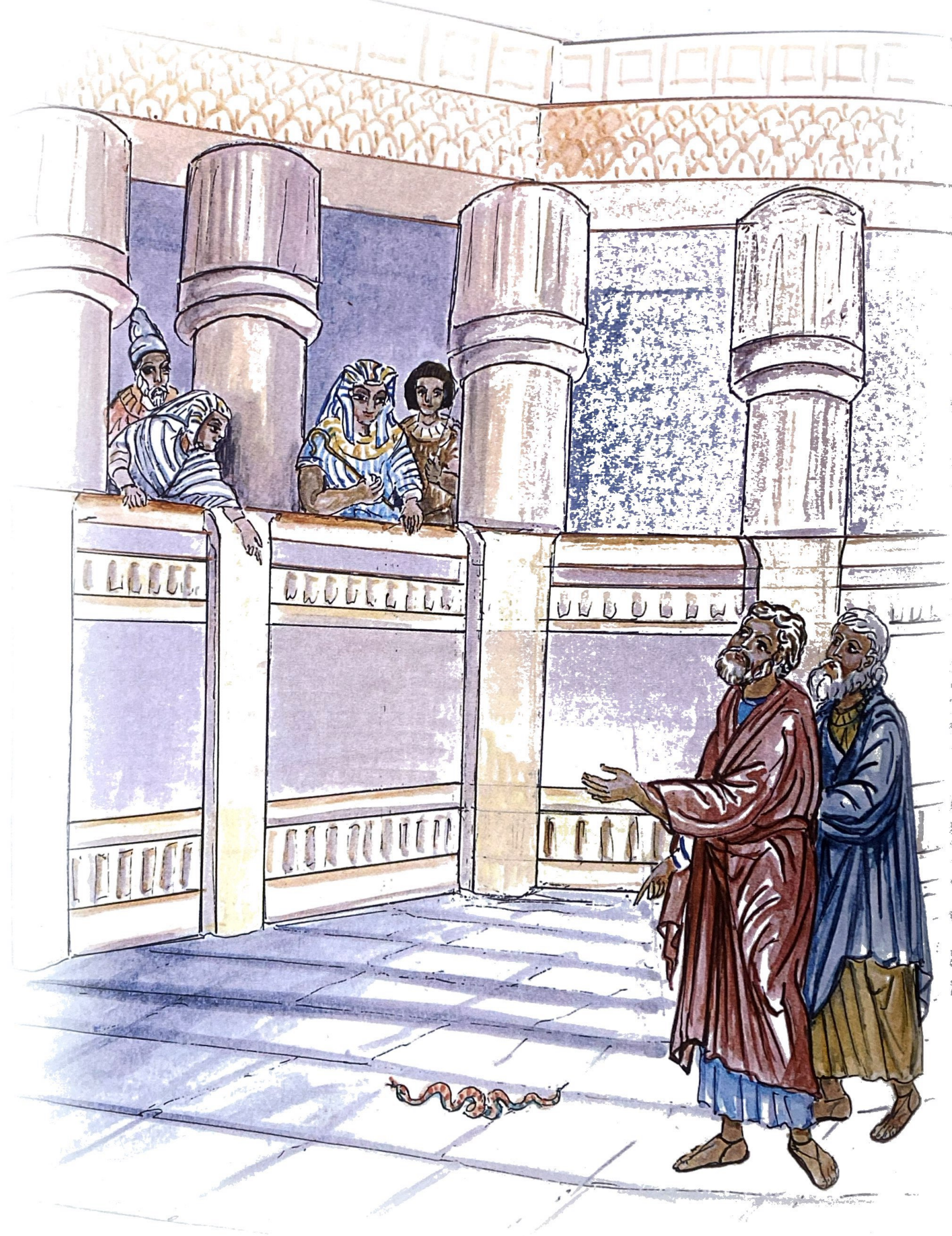
Moses returns to Egypt

Moses did what God told him. He took his family and went to Egypt. There he met his brother Aaron. Moses told Aaron that God had asked him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Aaron listened carefully to his brother and brought him to see the elders of Israel. Aaron told everyone that the Lord had spoken to Moses. They believed that God was ready to help the Israelites through Moses, so they bowed down to him.

(Exodus 4)

Moses and Aaron go to Pharaoh

After this, Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and told him, “The Lord, God of Israel, says, ‘Let my people go’.” Pharaoh replied, “Who is this Lord Whom I must obey?” And saying this, he sent Moses and Aaron out of the palace. Pharaoh was very angry and ordered the Israelites to be punished. When Moses saw that the people of Israel were suffering even more, he prayed to God and said, “Why did you send me here? Since I came to Pharaoh and spoke on Your behalf he treats them with cruelty and You have done nothing to free Your people.”



Then God said to Moses, “Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: with My power I will make him let you go. Go back to Pharaoh. I will be with you.” Moses and Aaron went to the palace for a second time, and Pharaoh demanded, “Prove to me that God has sent you. Perform a miracle!” Then Aaron threw his staff on the ground and it became a snake. Then Pharaoh called his magicians. Each of them threw their staffs on the ground and they all turned to snakes. But Aaron’s staff ate the staffs of the magicians. But Pharaoh was not impressed and he did not listen as the Lord had said.

(Exodus 5-7)

God sends disasters to Egypt

The next morning God sent Moses and Aaron to the River Nile. Pharaoh also came to that place. Right before their eyes, Aaron lifted his staff and struck the waters of the Nile. Immediately all the water became blood. The fish died and the river smelled bad, and the Egyptians could not get any drinking water from the river. Pharaoh’s magicians did the same thing, so Pharaoh was not impressed and refused to listen to Moses and Aaron. After seven days, Moses and Aaron went back to Pharaoh and Moses said, “If you don’t let the people of Israel go, I will send huge numbers of frogs to cover your land.” But the Pharaoh did not listen. So Moses said to Aaron, “Point with your staff towards the rivers and the lakes and make Egypt full of frogs.”

Aaron did this, and so many frogs came out that the whole land was covered: the houses, the beds, even the ovens. Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and told them, "Ask your God to remove the frogs from Egypt and I will let the Israelites go."

Moses prayed to God, and the frogs died and disappeared. But when Pharaoh saw that the land was clear of frogs, he did not keep his promise to let the people of Israel leave.



Moses and Aaron went back to Pharaoh and warned him, “You did not listen to us, so God will send new plagues.” But Pharaoh was not concerned. Every time that God sent a plague to Egypt he promised that he would let the Israelites go, but as soon as the plague was over, Pharaoh refused to keep his promise.

(Exodus 7-8)

God sends the worst plague of all

God kept sending new plagues. He sent hail which ruined the crops. He sent locusts which ate all the wheat and all the fruit. He sent a darkness so deep that for three days people could not even see each other. On the third day, Pharaoh called Moses and said, “You may go. But your sheep and cattle will stay here.” Moses then said, “We will leave nothing behind. We will take all our animals with us.”

Pharaoh was so angry that he said to Moses, “Get out of here! I do not want to see you again!” But Moses replied, “If you don’t let my people go, terrible things will happen. God will punish you and all the Egyptians: in every family in Egypt the firstborn son will die. Even yours!” But Pharaoh refused to change his mind. Moses left the palace angrily. He went to his people and said, “God will protect you if you do exactly what I tell you.



Go back to your houses and kill a lamb. Then take some of its blood and smear it on the doorframe. This will be a sign on your house to protect you from anything evil. You will cook the meat and eat it with flat bread and bitter herbs.”

And what Moses said happened: on that night every firstborn son in Egypt died, including the son of Pharaoh. But the children of the Israelites were not harmed.

Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and told them, “Get out! Take your sheep and cattle and leave Egypt.” Immediately all the Israelites took their belongings and left Egypt.

(Exodus 10-12)



The Israelites leave Egypt

A long line made up of thousands of people formed as all the Israelites left Egypt together. God escorted His people as they followed the road through the desert towards the Red Sea with their sheep, goats, and cattle. During the daytimes He was in front of them in a cloud to show the way, and during the night He lit their way in a pillar of fire. In this way they could walk without stopping. Only when they reached the Red Sea did the Israelites set up their tents and make camp.

Egypt had no more Israelites to be slaves, and Pharaoh regretted that he had let them go. So he said to his court, “I should not have given in! Now we have nobody to do all the hard work.” So Pharaoh decided to use force to bring them back. He took his chariots and his warriors and went after the Israelites.

(Exodus 13-14)

The Israelites cross the Red Sea

The people of Israel saw a large cloud of dust from afar: Pharaoh and his soldiers were coming after them. They became very frightened and started shouting at Moses, “What did you do? Why did you lead us out of Egypt? Now we will die in the desert.” But Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid! The Lord will fight for us.” He stretched out his hand over the sea. God sent a strong wind, so strong that the waters parted and the bottom of the sea became visible. The waters were divided and formed a wall on both sides, allowing the Israelites to walk across easily.

When Pharaoh and his soldiers saw what happened, they went after them on the same path. When all the Israelites had crossed, Moses stretched out his hand over the sea and the water came rushing back into its place, drowning all of the Egyptians.

In this way the Israelites were saved. Everyone glorified the God, singing this hymn:

“I will sing to the Lord, because He

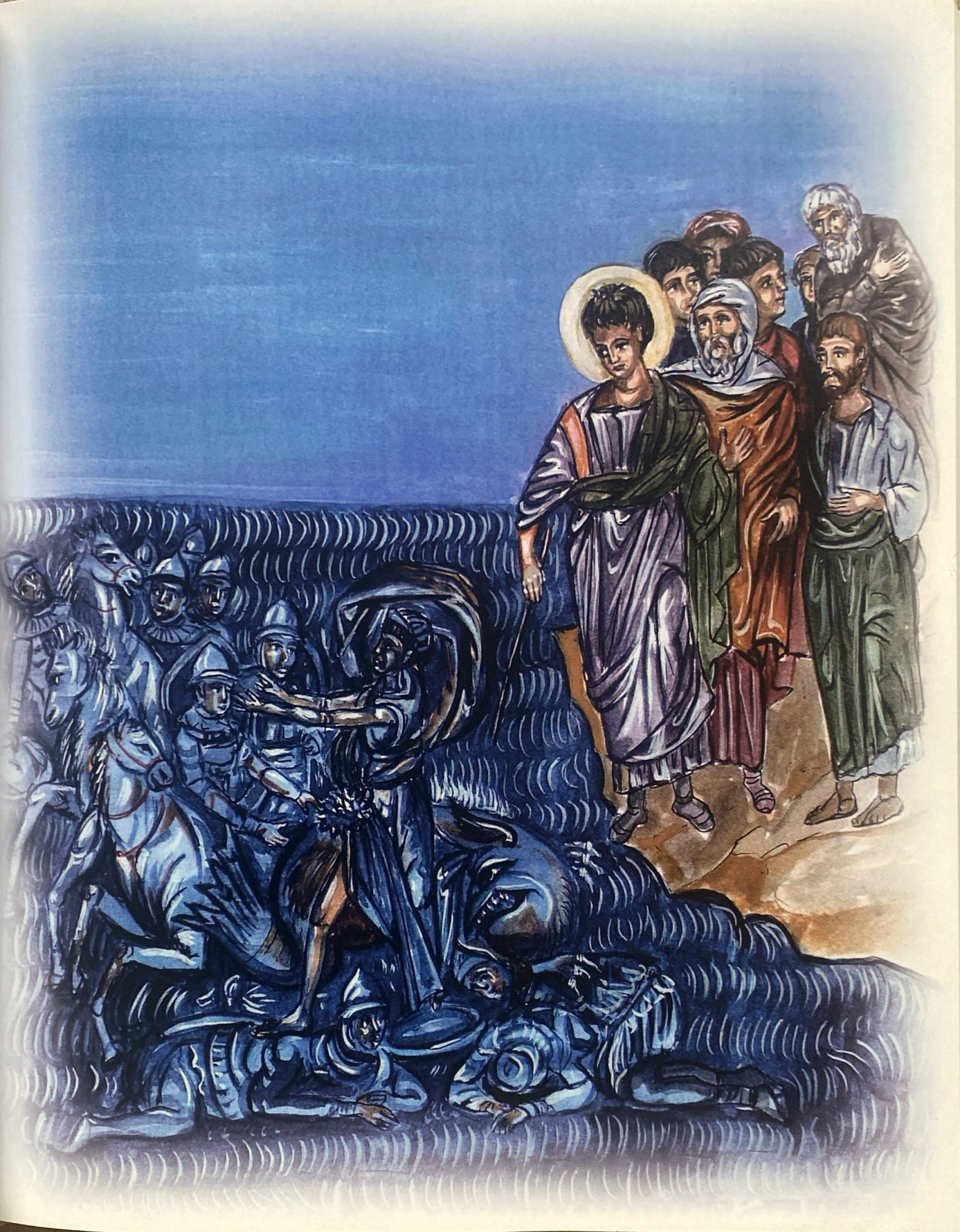
has won a glorious victory;

He has thrown the horses and their riders into the sea.

The Lord is my strong defender;

He is the One Who has saved me.

He is my God, and I will praise Him,



my father's God, and I will sing

of His greatness.

...You, Lord, will be King for ever and ever.”

Then Moses' sister Miriam took a tambourine and started praising God, and all the women joined in because they were so happy that the Lord had taken them out of Egypt and saved them.

(Exodus 14-15)

God provides for His people

The Israelites continued their trek through the desert. After a few weeks, they had used up all of their food. The people complained, “We should have stayed in Egypt! There we had plenty of meat and bread. Here in the

desert we will all starve to death!” Then the Lord spoke to Moses and said, “I have heard the Israelites complaining. Tell them that by evening they will eat meat and that by the morning they will be full with bread. This way they will learn that I am the Lord, their God.”

That night a large flock of quail covered the camp. The Israelites caught them easily and cooked and ate them. When they woke up the next morning, the ground all over was covered with some sort of thin and flaky stuff that



looked like frost. They all asked, “What is this?” Moses said, “This is the bread that the Lord has provided for you. He has ordered that you should collect as much as you need for one day. Nobody should keep any for tomorrow, because in the morning there will be more again.”

The Israelites called this new food ‘manna.’ Each person collected as much as they needed for that day. Some people who did not listen to Moses saved some overnight, but the next day they discovered that it was full of worms and smelled rotten. But they really did not have to keep it: every morning new manna was on the ground. It was white and tasted as sweet as honey.

(Exodus 16)



Water from the rock

The Israelites continued their journey in the desert and soon reached an area where there was no water at all. They began to complain to Moses. “Give us water to drink,” they cried out. Then Moses prayed to the Lord and He replied, “Walk in front of the people with your staff, and take the elders with you. I will be there before you on top of the rock on Mount Horeb. Strike the rock with your staff, and water will run for the people to drink.” So the Israelites received water to drink, despite not believing in the power of God.

(Exodus 17; Numbers 20)



Moses on Mount Sinai

After many weeks the Israelites reached Mount Sinai and camped at its base. Moses climbed up the mountain to meet with God. God told him, “I have led you out of Egypt. I have taken care of you and protected you in the desert. I want to be your God and I want you to be My people. If you really wish to hear My words and live according to them, then you will be Mine. Say this to the people of Israel.”

So Moses went back to the place where the Israelites had camped. He gathered them and repeated what God had told him. Then the people promised, “We will do what God said.” Then God said to Moses, “I will come close to you in a thick cloud, so that the people will hear Me when I speak to you and they will always trust you.”

Three days later there was thunder and lightening. A thick cloud was on top of the mountain. From the cloud there came a loud sound like a trumpet. Smoke and fire arose from the cloud. Everyone was very frightened. Moses said to the people, “I will go to the mountaintop. The Lord wants to speak to me. Wait here until I come back.” So Moses climbed up, allowing only Joshua to go with him. When they reached the top, Joshua stayed behind and Moses walked right into the cloud and continued on to the top. He stayed there for forty days and forty nights.

(Exodus 19 -20, 24)



The Ten Commandments

On the mountaintop God spoke with Moses and gave him the Ten Commandments. They were carved into two stones:

I am the Lord your God Who brought you out of Egypt. There will be no other gods for you but Me.

Do not make idols for yourselves of other gods. Do not bow down to any idol or worship it.

Do not use My name for evil purposes.

Keep the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath, a day of rest from work. It is a holy day that belongs to God.

Respect your father and your mother.

Do not commit murder.

Do not commit adultery.

Do not steal.

Do not accuse anyone falsely.

Do not covet anything belonging to your neighbor: his house or his wife or his animals or any of his things.

(Exodus 20)

The golden calf

The people waited for Moses to return. Many days passed and still he did not come down from the mountaintop. Finally the Israelites began to believe that Moses would never return. So they went to Aaron and said, “We don’t know what happened to Moses. He may never come back. Who will lead us then? We need a new god who will lead us out of the desert! Make a new god for us, a god that we can see!”

Aaron said to them, “Give me all your gold jewelry: your bracelets, your rings, and your earrings.” He took everything they gave him and melted it down and made a golden statue in the shape of a calf. The people bowed down to the calf and cried out, “This is the god that led us out of Egypt!” The Israelites had a feast in honor of their new god. They ate and drank and danced around the golden calf.

At this time, Moses began climbing back down the mountain, bearing the stones with the Ten Commandments in his arms. When he reached Joshua, who still waited for him, they heard the voices and the noise coming from the camp. Joshua said, “Perhaps there is a war.” Moses replied, “No, this is not the sound of war. I hear voices of celebration.” When they reached the camp, Moses saw the golden calf and the people bowing down to it. Then he became furiously angry and cast the stone tablets down so that they broke on a rock. Then he took the golden calf and threw it in the fire.

He said to Aaron, "What have the people done? How could you lead them in such a big sin?" Aaron answered, "Don't be angry! You know how difficult these people can be. Nobody knew what happened to you and the people asked for a new god to lead them."

(Exodus 32)



Moses speaks again with God

The next day Moses said to the people, “You have committed a very great sin. I will go back to God and pray for forgiveness.” Moses climbed once more to the top of Mount Sinai to speak with God. Again he stayed there for forty days and forty nights. God forgave the Israelites for their sin and gave Moses two new stones with the Ten Commandments carved on them.

Moses came down the mountain holding the two stones in his arms. He did not know that while he was talking with God, his face had begun to glow. When he returned to the camp and the Israelites saw his glowing face, they felt afraid. He asked them to come closer and announced all the commandments that the Lord had given them. Then he covered his face so that the glow could not be seen. Every time he spoke with God and told the people what He had said, he uncovered his face so everyone could see it glowing.

The most important commandments that the Lord had given to Moses were, “The Lord, and the Lord alone, is our God. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength,” and, “Love your neighbor as you love yourself.”

(Exodus 33-34; Deuteronomy 6; Leviticus 19)

The tent of meeting and the Ark of the Covenant

God asked Moses to gather contributions from the people to make a tent so that He might dwell with them. This tent was called “the tent of meeting.” God explained in great detail how the tent should be made and what should be placed in it. Within the tent there was to be a box for the Ten Commandments on the stone tablets. This box was named the Ark of the Covenant. There was also to be a table, the table for the bread offered to God, on top of which twelve breads should be placed along with a golden lamp. Finally, they were to build an altar outside of the tent. Both men and women made contributions for the tent of the meeting. Everybody gave a part of their possessions: golden bracelets and silver chains, costly gems in various colors, colorful painted wool, valuable rugs and drapes, soft leathers and animal skins, precious acacia wood, and spices and oils for the lamps.



Moses found two skilled craftsmen and explained exactly how everything should be made. They showed the others how they should build the tent of meeting and the Ark of the Covenant. Everyone helped. From the wool they made beautiful rugs and hangings for the interior of the tent. On the outside walls they used the leathers and skins. The craftsmen built the Ark from acacia wood and covered it with pure gold on both sides. On the cover they placed two golden angels. Everything was made exactly as the Lord had instructed.

When everything was ready, the tent was set up. Moses placed the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments inside the Ark. Then he brought the Ark inside the tent. When he went out, a cloud covered the tent and the bright light of the Lord filled it. The Israelites were then able to know what they should do by watching the tent. They travelled only on the days when the cloud surrounded the tent. If the cloud did not appear, they did not travel. In this way, God escorted His people to the Promised Land.

(Exodus 25, 35-40)

Aaron and his sons become priests

One day, Moses gathered all the people in front of the tent and said, "Aaron and his sons will be your priests. They will be responsible for organizing the worship. They will teach you and your children all the things related to the Commandments given to us by God."

Aaron and his sons washed themselves so that they would be clean in order to serve God. Then Moses gave them special priestly garments to wear. Moses said to Aaron and his sons, "When you bless Israel during worship, you will say:

'May the Lord bless you and keep you!

May the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you!

May the Lord look on you with favor and give you peace'."

(Leviticus 8; Numbers 6)



Moses is near Canaan

The people of Israel reached the desert of Paran and camped there. God said to Moses, "Send people to the land of Canaan. Choose twelve brave men to observe the land and the people and bring back some of the fruit that grows there." After forty days the men returned. They brought figs and a bunch of grapes so large that it took two men to carry it.

The men told the people all that they had seen. "It is a beautiful country indeed. There is plenty of milk and honey. Here you see its amazing fruit! But the people who live there are very strong. The cities are large and fortified. The men are as big as giants. When we saw them we felt like tiny locusts."

(Numbers 13)





Forty years in the desert

When the people of Israel heard this, they became frightened and they worried all night long. In the morning they went to Moses and said, “Why did the Lord bring us to this land? We will all die here!” And they said, “Come, let us appoint a leader and go back to Egypt.” They did not wish to obey Moses and Aaron any more.

Then Moses prayed to God for help. God said, “For how long will these people despise Me and complain about Me? They still do not trust that I will bring them to the land of Canaan. Nobody who complains will enter the Promised Land. The people will wander for forty years in the desert because they do not trust Me.”

When Moses told everyone what God had said, they were deeply sorry and regretted their complaints. But what God had decided came to pass: the people of Israel wandered in the desert for forty years.

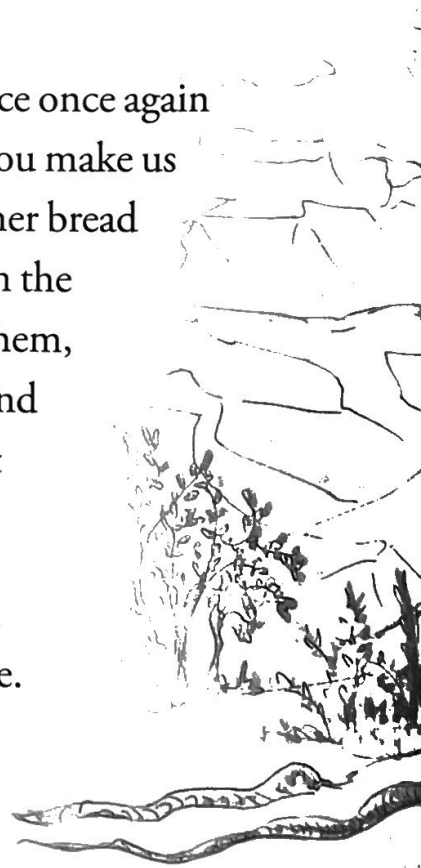
(Numbers 14)

The healing snake

The Israelites roamed the desert. They began to lose patience once again and started complaining about God to Moses. “Why did you make us leave Egypt?” they said. “To die in the desert? There is neither bread here nor water, and we are sick of this boring manna!” Then the Lord sent as punishment many poisonous snakes that bit them, and many people died. The Israelites then went to Moses and said, “We have sinned by speaking against God and against you. Please ask the Lord to send the snakes away.”

Moses prayed to the Lord for the people, and the Lord told him, “Make a bronze snake and attach it to the top of a pole. Tell anyone who is bitten by a snake to look at the bronze snake immediately. Moses did as the Lord said, and in this way all those who had been bitten by a snake were healed.

(Numbers 21)





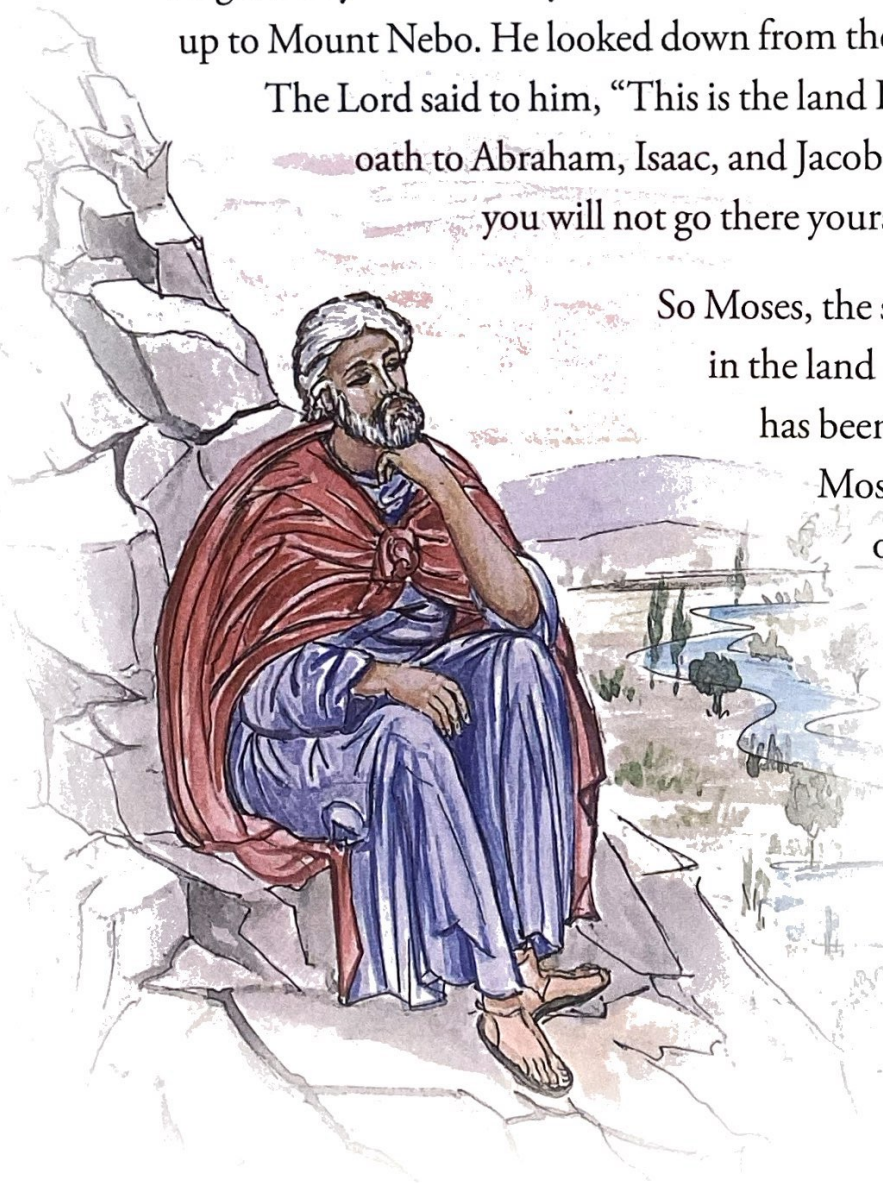
Moses dies

Moses said to the people, "I am very old now and I am going to die soon. But God is giving you a new leader, Joshua the son of Nun. Don't be afraid. The Lord will never leave you!" Moses continued, "Always remember what I have told you about the Lord. You must always live according to His Commandments and teach them to your children. Don't forget that you must obey the Lord!" Then he blessed the people and went up to Mount Nebo. He looked down from there at the land in the valley.

The Lord said to him, "This is the land I have promised with an oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I am letting you see it, but you will not go there yourself."

So Moses, the servant of God, died there in the land of Moab. Since then, there has been no other prophet like

Moses in all Israel. He was the only one who met the Lord face to face, and there was no other prophet later in history who did such great miracles and marvelous works as Moses.



God said to Joshua, "My servant Moses is dead. You and all the people should now prepare to enter the land that I promised to you. I will show you where to lead the people. Do not fear and do not hesitate: I, the Lord your God, will be with you wherever you go!"

Joshua announced to everyone, "Now we will enter the land that God has promised us. Prepare yourselves!" The people did as Joshua told them. So the Israelites finally entered the Promised Land after the long journey. And God protected them from their enemies.

(Deuteronomy 31-34; Joshua 1)

The walls of Jericho fall

Joshua led the people across the Jordan River and they walked towards the city of Jericho. When they reached the city walls, the gates were locked because the people of Jericho did not want to let the Israelites in.

Then God said to Joshua, “You and all the armed men will walk around the city once each day. You will do this for six days. Take the Ark of the Covenant with you! Seven priests will walk in front of the ark and will blow seven trumpets. On the seventh day you will walk around the walls seven times while the priests blow the trumpets. When you hear a long blast, then you will start shouting with all your strength and the walls will collapse. In this way you will conquer the city.”

Joshua did as God told him. Once a day for six days they walked around the city. On the seventh day they got up at dawn and walked around the city seven times. On the seventh circuit, when it was time for the priests to blow the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, “Now shout with all your strength!” The walls collapsed at the mighty sound and the people rushed in and took the city.

The Israelites conquered one city after another. Soon they ruled all of Canaan. Their long journey was over.

(Joshua 6)







The Promised Land

The Israelites lived in the land that God had promised them. From the twelve sons of Jacob the grandson of Abraham, came forth twelve tribes. Joshua divided the land among them, and each tribe took its own territory.

When Joshua grew old, he gathered all the tribes of Israel together in the city of Shechem. Joshua knew that he would die soon, so he said to the people, "Your God gave you a land to live in. Now you should respect your God and worship Him sincerely and with devotion. Your God does not want you to worship other gods, like those whom your ancestors worshipped. This you must decide today: do you want to remain faithful and worship the Lord our God? Or do you choose to worship other gods?" The people responded, "We want to worship the Lord!"

Joshua took a large stone and set it under a big tree and said to the people, "Here, this stone will be our witness. When you see it you should remember: you promised to be faithful to God!" After this, Joshua died.
(Joshua 24)

Judges

The Israelites settled down in their own land. The people became farmers who sowed the fields with wheat and shepherds who raised sheep and goats. As the years passed by, however, they began to forget their promise and started to worship other gods that the neighboring people worshipped. So God abandoned them and no longer protected them from enemy attack. Because God felt sorry for His people, He occasionally gave them a capable leader who saved Israel from enemies at different times. These leaders were named 'judges.' As long as a judge lived, he was responsible for justice and made sure that the people followed the Lord's commands. But whenever a judge died, Israel lost faith again and moved away from God.

(Judges 2)

Deborah

Among Israel's judges there was a woman named Deborah. At that time, Jabin was the king of the Canaanites and the commander of his army was named Sisera. He had nine hundred iron chariots and for twenty years he oppressed the Israelites.

Then Deborah called a mighty warrior, Barak, and told him, "The Lord, God of Israel commands: take with you ten thousand men and go to Mount Tabor; there Sisera together with his chariots and foot-soldiers will attack you, but you will win." Barak was afraid to go alone and so he asked Deborah to go with him. So Deborah went along and in the battle that followed, God threw Sisera and his army into confusion and they were beaten.

On the day of the victory, Deborah and Barak sang this song:

We praise You, Lord!

Our soldiers were

ready to follow You.

Listen, kings and rulers,

while I sing for the Lord,

the God of Israel.



Our Lord, God of Israel, before You

rain poured from the sky,

the earth trembled,

and mountains shook.

Then the Lord's people marched

and said, "Deborah, lead us!

Barak, capture our enemies!"

Our Lord, we pray

that all Your enemies will die.

But let everyone who loves You

shine brightly

like the sun at dawn.

(Judges 4-5)

Gideon

The Israelites once again displeased the Lord with their acts, and the Lord surrendered them to be ruled by the people of Midian for seven years.

They were cruel overlords, and the Israelites were forced to establish hiding places in the mountains and caves in order to protect themselves.

Whenever the Israelites tried to sow their fields, they were attacked by the people of Midian, of Amalek, and of the other tribes of the East. Because



of the people of Midian, the Israelites were reduced to a terrible condition and began to call on the Lord once more. Then an angel of God came to the village of Ophrah and appeared to a man named Gideon and told him, "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior. With the power you have, go, and free Israel from the Midianites. I am sending you." Gideon replied, "But how, my Lord, will I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in the tribe of Manasseh, and I am the youngest one of my father's family." Then the

Lord told him, “This is true, but I will be with you and you will beat the Midianites as if they were a single man.”

The first thing Gideon did was to destroy an altar to Baal, a false god, that had been built by the Israelites. After this he built a new altar for the true God, and then he began to gather an army. Thousands of people responded to his call. Then the Lord said to Gideon, “Your army is numerous and so the Israelites might boast that they have won the battle by their own strength. I will free you using only the strength of three hundred men.” Then Gideon divided three hundred people into three groups and gave to each of them a trumpet and a jar with a torch inside. Then he said, “You will watch me closely and do what I do from the moment I reach the enemy’s camp. When I blow my trumpet, you will also blow yours, and you will cry out, “For the Lord and for Gideon!”

Later that evening, Gideon and a hundred of his men reached the edge of the camp just after the changing of the guard. Then they blasted with their trumpets and broke their jars. The other two divisions blasted their trumpets immediately and broke the jars and held their torches aloft and cried out, “For the Lord and for Gideon!” They took up positions around the camp, and saw that the soldiers inside were running around and panicking. When Gideon’s three hundred men blew their trumpets, the enemy soldiers attacked and killed each other.

After this the Israelites said to Gideon, “You should become our leader and after you your son and then your grandson, because you freed us from the Midianites.” Gideon replied, however, “Neither I nor my sons will govern you. The Lord shall be your ruler.”

(Judges 6-8)

Samson

One of the judges of the people of Israel was Samson. God had warned his parents that their child would be devoted to God. God would be with him and to show this, he should never cut his hair.

Indeed, this child had great strength. When he was still very young he was attacked by a young lion, but he caught it and ripped it in two with his bare hands. At that time, the Philistines had conquered Israel and were treating them cruelly. Samson managed to create many problems for the Philistines, both with their soldiers and with their crops. For this reason they were trying to discover the source of his strength so that they could stop him.

They went and found Delilah, the woman Samson loved. They promised her many silver coins if she found a way to betray him. She started asking about the source of his great power, but Samson always found a way to avoid telling her the truth. Delilah understood that he was resisting her, so with much crying and manipulation she managed to make him open his heart to her. He told her that he was devoted to God and that if he cut his hair he would lose his great strength.

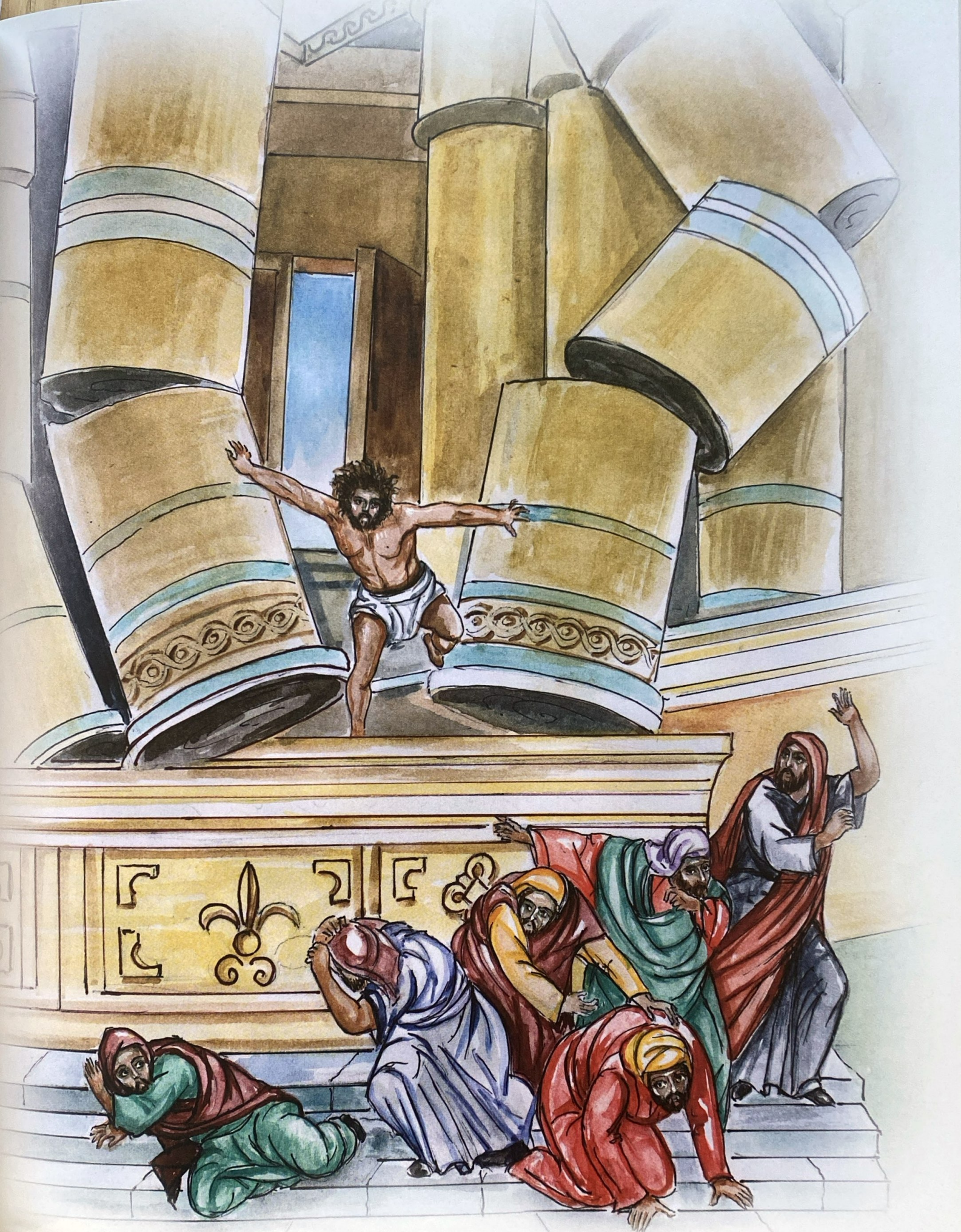
She immediately reported this to the Philistines, and they came to her house with the money they had promised. She lulled Samson to sleep on her lap and called someone to shave his head and cut off his seven braids.



Samson no longer had the power to resist and the Philistines captured him. They put his eyes out, blinding him, and took him to the city of Gaza where he was imprisoned with bronze chains. There they forced him to grind wheat all day long at the mill. After a while the leaders of the Philistines gathered at the huge temple of their god Dagon, to thank him because Samson, their great enemy, had finally been captured. They brought him there and made him stand between the two central pillars of the temple and they laughed at his misery. Three thousand people were in the temple and even on top of its roof.

In the meantime Samson's hair had grown back. At one point he told the young man who was guiding him, "Let me lean on the pillars that hold up the temple." Then he prayed to the Lord and said, "Lord, God, please make me strong one more time so that I can take revenge on the Philistines for blinding me." He then held the two pillars, and said, "Let me die along with the Philistines." He pushed with all his strength and the temple fell down and killed them all. Samson, with his death, killed more Philistines than he had killed during his lifetime. He had governed the people of Israel as a judge for twenty years.

(Judges 13-16)



Ruth and Naomi

There were times of drought when it did not rain for a long time. When this happened, no crops could grow and people began to starve. During such a time of famine, a family from Bethlehem went to live in the neighboring country of Moab where people could still find food. After a while the father died. His wife and two sons were left there in the foreign country. When the sons grew up, they married two young women from Moab. The two sons died as well, so the three women were left alone.

The mother, Naomi, said to her daughters-in-law, "I will return to Bethlehem. You should stay here in your country and find happiness." One of the two young women decided to stay behind but the other, Ruth, said, "I will come with you! Your people are my people as well. Your God is my God. I will never leave you." So Ruth went with Naomi to Bethlehem. When they reached Bethlehem it was harvest time. The poor people used to go into the fields and pick up the wheat left behind by the harvesters. Ruth did this work so that she and her mother-in-law could eat.

The owner of the field, a man named Boaz, passed by and saw Ruth. He was kind to Ruth and said to her, "You may pick up wheat from my fields." And he told his workers, "When Ruth is here leave more wheat for her to pick up." Naomi told Ruth that she was related to Boaz. She said, "Everything will be all right now. Boaz will take care of us." Boaz helped Ruth and Naomi in every way he could. He grew to care deeply for Ruth and said, "I have seen how faithful you are to Naomi. You have a good heart. Be my wife! Naomi can come and live with us."

So Boaz married Ruth and after a year they had a son. Naomi was very happy. This grandchild was like her own son. So Ruth found a new home, although she was a foreigner.

(Ruth 1-4)



Samuel the prophet

God often spoke to the Israelites through wise men and women who were called prophets. Sometimes the prophets had to warn the Israelites when they went against God's will. At other times, they comforted the people during their misfortunes. One of these prophets was Samuel, and ever since his birth he was destined to serve the Lord. This is his story.

A man named Elkanah lived with his wife Hannah in the mountainous area occupied by the tribe of Ephraim. For many years Hannah had hoped to have a child but she couldn't. Every year Hannah and Elkanah went to the shrine at Shiloh. There Hannah prayed to God. She wept, saying, "Lord, if you give me a son, I promise that I will dedicate him to You. He will be Your servant for his whole life!"

Eli was the priest at Shiloh. When he overheard why Hannah was crying he said to her, "Don't worry! Go home and the God of Israel will give you what you have asked for." It happened as he had promised. Hannah had a son and she named him Samuel. Hannah kept her promise; she took Samuel to the shrine at Shiloh and gave him to Eli, who taught him and helped him become a priest. Every year, his mother made a small priestly garment and brought it to him at Shiloh.

One night when Samuel was asleep God called to him, "Samuel!" Samuel woke up, ran to Eli and said, "Did you call for me? I am here." But Eli said, "My son, I did not call for you. Go back to sleep." God again called Samuel. He got up and ran to Eli and said, "Did you call for me? I am here." But Eli said again, "My son, I did not call for you. Go back to sleep." God called Samuel for a third time. He got up once more and ran to Eli and said, "Did you call for me? I am here."



Then Eli realized that it was God who called the child, so he said to Samuel, "Go back to sleep. If somebody calls you, say, "Speak, my Lord, Your servant is listening." Samuel left and went back to sleep. The Lord said, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel replied, "Speak, my Lord, Your servant is listening." Then God spoke to Samuel about many things.

From that day on God often spoke to Samuel. When Samuel grew up, he became a prophet and everyone listened to him.

(1 Samuel 1-4)

Saul becomes a king

Samuel had grown old when God gave him a mission: he had to find a king for the people of Israel.

One day, a young man named Saul came to the town where Samuel lived. He was looking for some donkeys that his father had lost and could not find. So he thought, "The prophet might know where I can find them." When Samuel saw Saul approaching, God spoke to him and said, "Here is the man of whom I have spoken. He will be the king of My people." Samuel said to Saul, "Do not worry about the donkeys because they have been found. But listen to me: God has great plans for you!" Samuel anointed Saul as the king of Israel. He said to the people, "He is the king the Lord has chosen for you." Then they all cried out, "Long live the king!"

(1 Samuel 8-10)



Saul and David

Saul was king for many years. As time went by, he began to disobey the Lord. Then God said to Samuel, "Saul cannot be king of Israel anymore. Fill your jar with oil and go to the city of Bethlehem. Find a man named Jesse, because I have found among his sons the king that I need."



Samuel did as the Lord had asked and went to Bethlehem, where Jesse presented seven of his sons to Samuel. None of them, however, was chosen by God. Samuel then asked Jesse, "Are these all of your children?" Jesse replied, "There is one other, the youngest, but he is out taking care of the herd. His name is David." Samuel said, "Send for him." When David came, God said to Samuel, "This is the one. Get up and anoint him king!" Samuel took the jar with the oil and anointed David, and he became king of Israel. From that day on, God was with David.

Meanwhile, Saul was sitting in his palace. He wasn't feeling well because he knew that God had abandoned him. He was tortured by his thoughts. Then his servants had an idea and asked, "Should we find someone to play the harp for you? Music might make you feel better. David, the son of Jesse from Bethlehem, knows how to play the harp. He is a remarkable man and a brave warrior. He speaks wisely and he is handsome. One can tell immediately that God is with him."

So Saul asked David to come to the palace, and when he played the harp, Saul felt better.

(1 Samuel 16)

David and Goliath

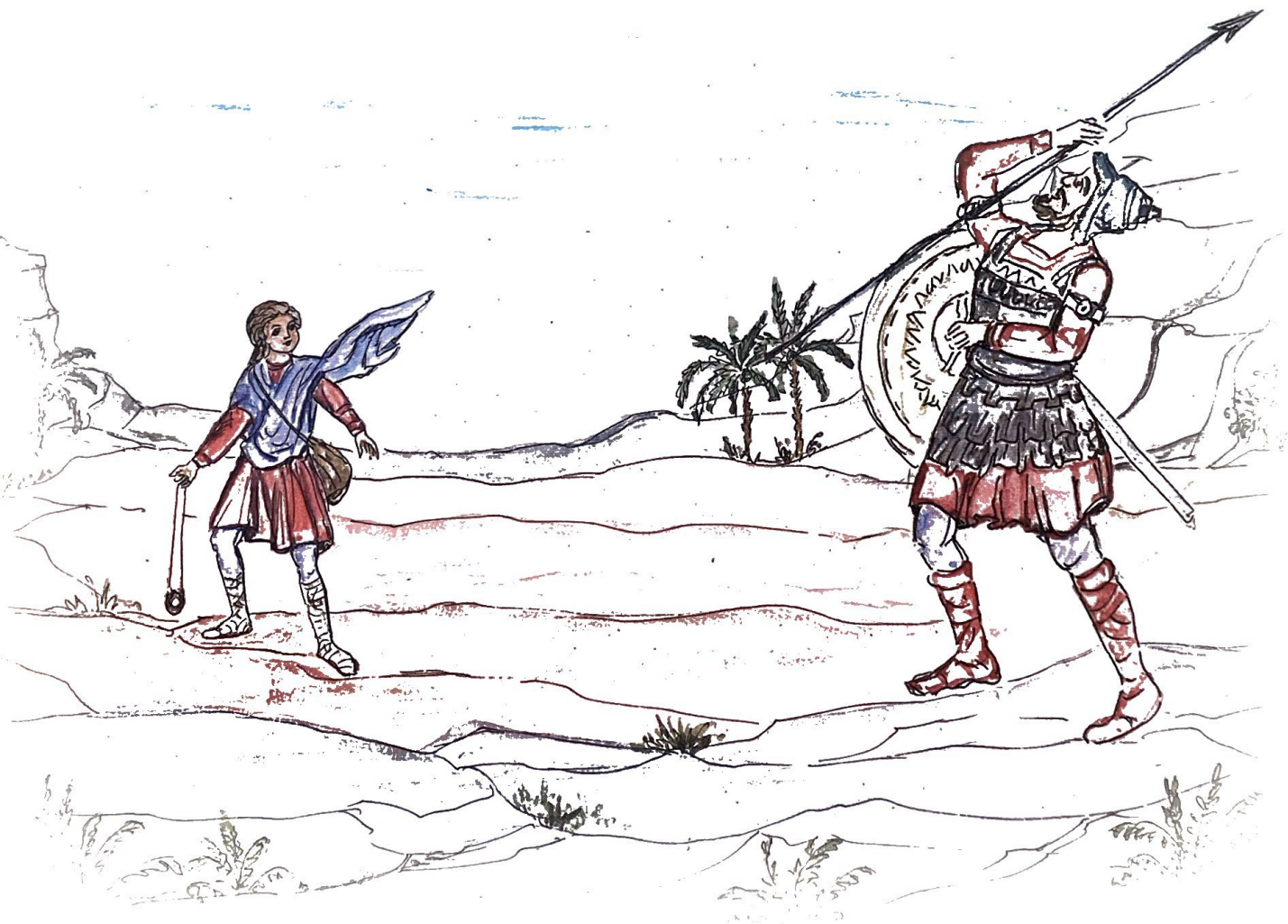
While Saul was king, there were wars constantly between the people of Israel and their enemies, the Philistines.

One day the Philistines came to the borders of Israel and camped. Then King Saul called on the men of Israel to prepare for battle. David's older brothers went to war, but David was too young to fight. He had to stay with his father and take care of the sheep. When Saul and the Israelites reached the borders, a warrior came forward from the Philistines' camp. His name was Goliath and he was very tall, a giant. He wore heavy armor and a bronze helmet. He carried a heavy sword and a gigantic spear, and another soldier followed him, carrying his shield.

Goliath cried out to the Israelites, "Which one of you dares to fight me? If somebody defeats me one on one, then you have won the war. If I win, you will be our slaves." When King Saul and his men heard this, they were terrified. Every day Goliath came forward and asked, "Which one of you will fight me?" Nobody, however, dared to accept his challenge.

One day Jesse sent David to his brothers to find out how they were doing in the camp. While David was there talking to his brothers, Goliath once again challenged the Israelites to a duel. David saw that all the Israelites were frightened, and he heard the soldiers saying, "Whoever is able to kill Goliath will be given great wealth by the king and his daughter in marriage as well."

David went to Saul and said, "My king, I am not afraid of this Philistine who scorns the people of God. I want to fight him!" Saul replied, "That is impossible! You are too young, and the Philistine is an experienced warrior!" David said, "While I was taking care of my father's sheep, sometimes a lion or bear would come to hunt among the flock. I would give chase, kill the predator, and rescue the sheep. God saved me from the claws of the lion and the bear. He will save me from the hands of Goliath."



Then Saul said to David, “Go, and may the Lord be with you!” He gave David his own armor and helmet. David wore Saul’s sword on top of the armor and took a few steps, but the armor was much too heavy for him, so he removed it. David instead went to the river and picked up five pebbles. Then he took his stick and his sling and walked towards Goliath. The huge Philistine looked at David and laughed when he saw how young and small he was. David took a pebble and cast it with his sling, and the rock hit Goliath’s head so hard that he fell on his face to the ground. When the Philistines saw that their mightiest warrior had been killed, they all ran away from the field of battle.

David earned glory and praise for his deed. He did not return to his family, but stayed with King Saul in the palace.

(1 Samuel 17)

David and Jonathan

Saul had a son named Jonathan, and he became best friends with David. David was so much more popular than the king that Saul was very jealous. Jonathan heard him say, "I will kill David!" Jonathan rushed to his friend David and warned him, "My father wants to kill you! Beware and hide yourself! I will talk to my father once more about you." After his son spoke to him about David, Saul changed his mind and promised not to harm David. One day Saul was again in a bad mood, and while David was playing the harp, Saul was overcome with anger. He threw his spear at David, but he missed, and David immediately fled from the palace.

Jonathan secretly visited David's hiding place. He was sad because he knew that David could never return to the palace again. David and Jonathan promised each other, "We will always be friends, no matter what happens."

(1 Samuel 18-20)



David saves Saul's life

David was hiding in the desert with a few other men. When Saul learned this, he took three thousand soldiers and began to search for him. During the search, Saul discovered a cave and entered it, not knowing that David and his men were hiding there. David silently crept up behind Saul and cut off a piece of his robe.

When Saul left the cave, David ran after him and cried out, "My lord, the king!" Saul was shocked to see David kneeling in front of him. David said



to Saul, "Look what I have in my hand: it is a piece of your robe. I was so close that I could have killed you if I wished, but I did not. Don't you see that I don't want to hurt you? Why do you want to kill me?" Then Saul started crying and said, "I am ashamed of myself. You did only good to me and I paid you back with evil. God will reward you for this. I know for sure that you will become king of Israel."

So it happened. Some years later, David became king, and Saul and Jonathan died in a war with the Philistines. David mourned them greatly.

(I Samuel 22-24; II Samuel 1)

David the King

When David became king of Israel, he took over Jerusalem and made it his capital and built a palace there. He was a powerful king, and he trusted in God completely. Everybody could see that David was chosen by God, and for this reason the people of Israel loved and honored him.

King David continued to play music and write poetry. He wrote many songs to praise God. They are called The Psalms.

(II Samuel 5)



David's Psalms

The Lord is my shepherd

You, Lord, are my shepherd.
I will never be in need.
You let me rest in fields
of green grass.
You lead me to streams
of peaceful water,
and You refresh my life.
You are true to Your Name,
and You lead me
along the right paths.
I may walk through valleys
as dark as death,
but I won't be afraid.
You are with me,
and Your shepherd's rod makes me feel safe.
You treat me to a feast,
while my enemies watch.
You honor me as Your guest,
and You fill my cup
until it overflows.
Your kindness and love
will always be with me
each day of my life,
and I will live forever
in Your house, Lord.

(Psalm 23)





Lord, You know everything about me

You have looked deep into my heart, Lord,
and You know all about me.

You know when I am resting or when I am working.
Before I even speak a word,
You know what I will say,
and with Your powerful arm
You protect me from every side.
Where could I go to escape
from Your spirit or from Your sight?

If I were to climb up to the highest heavens,
You would be there.

Suppose I had wings like the dawning day
and flew across the ocean.

Even then Your powerful arm would guide and protect me.
Or suppose I said, "I'll hide in the dark
until night comes to cover me over."

But You see in the dark
because daylight and dark are all the same to You.
You are the One Who put me together
inside my mother's body,
and I praise You because of
the wonderful way You created me.

Everything You do is marvelous!

Of this I have no doubt.

Look deep into my heart, God,
and find out everything I am thinking.

Don't let me follow evil ways,
but lead me in the way that time has proven true.

(Psalm 139)



God is the true King

I will praise You, my God and King,
and always honor Your name.

You are wonderful, Lord,
and You deserve all praise,
because You are much greater
than anyone can understand.
Each generation will announce to the next
Your wonderful and powerful deeds.

You are merciful, Lord!

You are kind and patient and always loving.

You are good to everyone,
and You take care of all Your creation.

All creation will thank You,
and Your loyal people will praise You.

Then everyone will know about the mighty things You do
and Your glorious kingdom.

Your kingdom will never end, and You will rule forever.

Our Lord, You keep Your word
and do everything You say.

When someone stumbles or falls, You give a helping hand.

Everyone depends on You, and when the time is right,
You provide them with food.

By Your own hand You satisfy
the desires of all who live.

I will praise You, Lord,
and everyone will respect Your holy name forever.

(Psalm 145)

King Solomon

David was Israel's king for forty years and when he died, his son Solomon became king. One night, God appeared to Solomon in a dream and said, "Ask for whatever you wish and I will give it to you."

Solomon said, "Lord, You loved my father greatly because he was faithful and obedient. And now, Lord, my God, You have made me king. I am very young, however, and do not know how to rule. So please give me the wisdom I need to rule Your people and the ability to judge what is right and wrong for them."

The Lord was pleased with King Solomon's plea and said, "You could have asked for wealth or long life, but you did not. For this reason, I will give you the wisdom and knowledge you requested, more than anyone has ever had or ever will have. Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for: wealth and glory." It soon became known all over the world how wise and clever King Solomon was. People came to him from afar, for they wanted to hear what Solomon said. At that time there was no temple in Jerusalem where the people of Israel could pray to God, so Solomon decided to build one. It took seven years for Solomon to have the huge temple built, but finally it was done and Solomon and his people could worship God in the new, wonderful temple.

The people gathered in front of the new temple. Solomon stood before the altar and prayed, “Lord, God of Israel, there is no other God like You in heaven or here on earth. Even the heavens, great and infinite, are too small for You. This temple that I have built is also too small for You. For this reason, I ask the following: May Your eyes be on our temple constantly. You promised us: ‘I will live with you,’ so listen to us as we pray in this Temple. Listen to our prayers and forgive us when we do something wrong. Help us when we are in danger.” After this prayer, Solomon blessed the people, and later they all celebrated with a big festival, the Feast of the Tabernacles.

(1 Kings 3-6, 8)



The Queen of Sheba visits Solomon

Solomon was so famous that even the Queen of Sheba had heard of him. She took a long journey to meet Solomon in Jerusalem, because she wanted to see for herself how wise the king was by asking him difficult questions. She took along many camels loaded with valuable gifts for Solomon: perfume, gold, and valuable gems.



Solomon answered all her questions easily. There wasn't any question that the king could not answer. Solomon showed the queen his great palace and the wonderful temple he had built. The queen was amazed and admired Solomon very much. She said to the king, "It was true what I have heard about your works and your wisdom. I did not believe it until I had seen it with my own eyes. Now I know that your wisdom surpasses everything I have heard. May the Lord your God be blessed, for He chose you to be king over His people Israel!"

(1 Kings 10)

Wise words of Solomon

A wise son is a joy to his father and a foolish son is his mother's sorrow.

Treasure that is acquired by unlawful deeds is of no benefit, but honesty delivers one from death.

The Lord will not let the righteous man go hungry, but He will not fulfill the desires of greedy evil men.

He who stores food during the summer is a wise son; but he who sleeps during harvest time is an unworthy son.

In an abundance of words, sin is not lacking, but the person who tames his tongue is wise.

The hope of the righteous leads to joy, while the hope of the unrighteous will be lost.

People who live a lawful life are saved by righteousness, while the unlawful people are trapped by their greed.

The good man does good to himself, while the harsh man does harm to his own body.

One gives abundantly and becomes richer, and another is greedy and becomes poorer.

The person who likes to be corrected loves knowledge and the one who hates scolding is a fool.

The truth lives forever, while a lie exists only for a moment.

Every wise man thinks before he acts, while the fool shows off his foolishness.

One who despises his neighbor is sinful but the one who feels pity for the poor will have good luck.

The person who controls his anger is prudent and the person who is quick to anger shows that he is a fool.

It is better to have a dish of herbs with love rather than to eat meat and have hatred all around.

Commit your doings to the Lord, and your goals will be fulfilled.

(Proverbs 10-16)

The prophet Elijah

After Solomon's death the Israelites started quarreling among themselves. The land was divided in two and each part had its own king. The people did not care about the true God any more and worshipped idols which they themselves made of stone and wood.

One of their kings was named Ahab. He worshipped a false god named Baal, who was said to be the god of the sky and of rain. Then God sent the prophet Elijah to King Ahab. Elijah said to the king, "I vow to the true God that for the following years there will be no rain. This will be your punishment because you worship idols and not the true God."



So it happened. For three years there was no rain. Nothing grew, all the plants died, and the people were starving. King Ahab was furious with Elijah. God said to Elijah, "Go and hide from Ahab." And He led him to the brook of Cherith where there was water to drink. God sent ravens to Elijah that brought bread and meat every day. After awhile, however, the brook went dry.

Then God spoke to Elijah and said, "Go to the town of Zarephath and stay there. I have commanded a widow to provide you with food." When Elijah reached the city gate, he saw a widow collecting pieces of wood. He asked her, "Please bring me some water and a piece of bread." She replied, "I have no bread, only some barley and oil. I have come here to pick up wood to cook the little that is left for me and my son, but after that we will die."

Then Elijah said, "Don't worry! Go and make a small loaf for me and bring it and then make some for you and your son. For the Lord, the God of Israel has promised, 'The jar with the flour will not become empty, nor will the jar with the oil run out, until the day that I send rain'."

The woman went and did as Elijah told her, and the three of them had food for many days, and the jars never became empty.

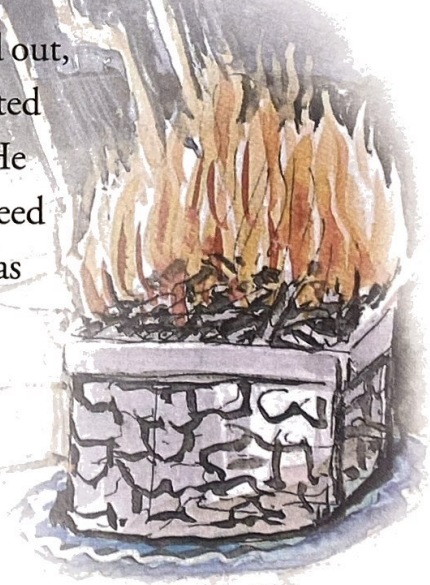
(1 Kings 16-17)

Elijah and Baal's prophets

For three years it did not rain, and many people starved. Then God said to Elijah, "Go to Ahab and I will send rain." As soon as Ahab saw Elijah approaching, he said, "Is it you, the one who brings trouble to Israel?" Elijah replied, "I am not troubling Israel. You and your family are. You disobeyed the Lord's commandment and worshipped Baal. Now gather all the Israelites on Mount Carmel. Gather also the prophets of Baal."

All came to Mount Carmel. Elijah approached the people and said, "You must decide now. Who is your God: the Lord or Baal? I am the only prophet of the Lord, while Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets. Let two calves be brought to us. Baal's prophets will choose one. Let them cut it into pieces and put it on their altar. I will take the other calf to my altar. No one will light the wood. Let them call upon the name of their god, and I will call upon the name of the Lord. The one who answers with fire shall be the true God."

All of Baal's prophets danced around their altar and cried out, "Baal, listen to us!" But they received no reply. Elijah started mocking them. "Cry out louder," he said. "He is a god! He might be busy somewhere else! He might be asleep and need to wake up!" Baal's prophets cried out louder. But there was no sign of a reply.





Then Elijah went to his altar and piled up wood. Around the altar he dug a trench. Then he poured water upon the wood and into the trench. He prayed to God and said, "Answer me, my Lord, so that these people may learn that You are the Lord God, and so that You will bring them back to Yourself."

Then God sent fire from heaven and burned the meat, the wood, the stones, the earth, and even the water in the trench. When the people saw this, they bowed down and said, "The Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God!" Then a storm came and it started raining on the dry land.

(1 Kings 18)

The prophet Isaiah

Another great prophet was Isaiah. One day he had a vision of God asking him, "Will you be my messenger?" Isaiah replied, "Send me!" So Isaiah became a prophet and spoke to the people about what would happen when the Lord sent the Savior.

(Isaiah 6)

One day he went to encourage King Ahaz, who was upset because an army of enemies had encircled Jerusalem. So he said to him, "The Lord will give you a sign: a young woman will become pregnant and have a son, and his name will be 'Immanuel,' which means 'the Lord is with us'."

(Isaiah 7)

On another occasion he described to the people the time when the Savior would come:

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light.
They lived in a land of shadows,
but now light is shining on them.
Unto us a Child is born!
Unto us a son is given!
And He will be our ruler.
He will be called 'Wonderful Counsellor,'
'Mighty God,' 'Eternal Father,'
'Prince of Peace.'

(Isaiah 9)

Isaiah even described the sufferings of the Savior: He was despised and rejected by men; a man so full of sorrows that no one would even look at him. He bore the burden of our griefs and suffered our pains. Our sins were the reason why he was injured, our unlawful acts the reason why he was bruised. For the sake of our salvation he was punished, in his wounds we found healing. He was tortured but he humbly bore it without complaint. As a sheep led to slaughter, as a lamb that stands speechless in front of his shearer, he never complained. He never committed any crime nor was there a deceitful word in his mouth.

(Isaiah 53)

The prophet Jeremiah

Another prophet was Jeremiah. God called him and said, “Even before you were born you were chosen to be a prophet to My people.” Jeremiah replied, “But Lord, my God, I do not know how to preach. I am still young.” God replied, “You are not too young. Go to the people and say what I tell you to say. Do not fear anybody, for I am with you and I will protect you.”

One day Jeremiah had to go to a potter’s house. He saw the potter making a jar on his wheel. The jar broke, so he began another and gave it the form he wanted. Then God said to Jeremiah, “Can’t I treat you the way this potter treats clay? You are like clay in My hands. Tell the people: if they change their ways, I will help them.”

(Jeremiah 1,18)

The prophet Jeremiah was given a message for the people of God. It promised that at the time when the Savior comes, God will make a new agreement with His people. God's message said, "The time will come when I will make a new agreement with My people. It will have nothing to do with the old agreement I made with their ancestors on the day I led them out of Egypt. But they did not keep our agreement, and for this reason I did not help them. This is the new agreement: I will place My law within their consciences and write it upon their hearts. They will all know Me, from the least to the greatest. I will forgive their lawlessness and I will not remember their sins. I, the Lord, say so."

(Jeremiah 31)



Jonah and the big fish

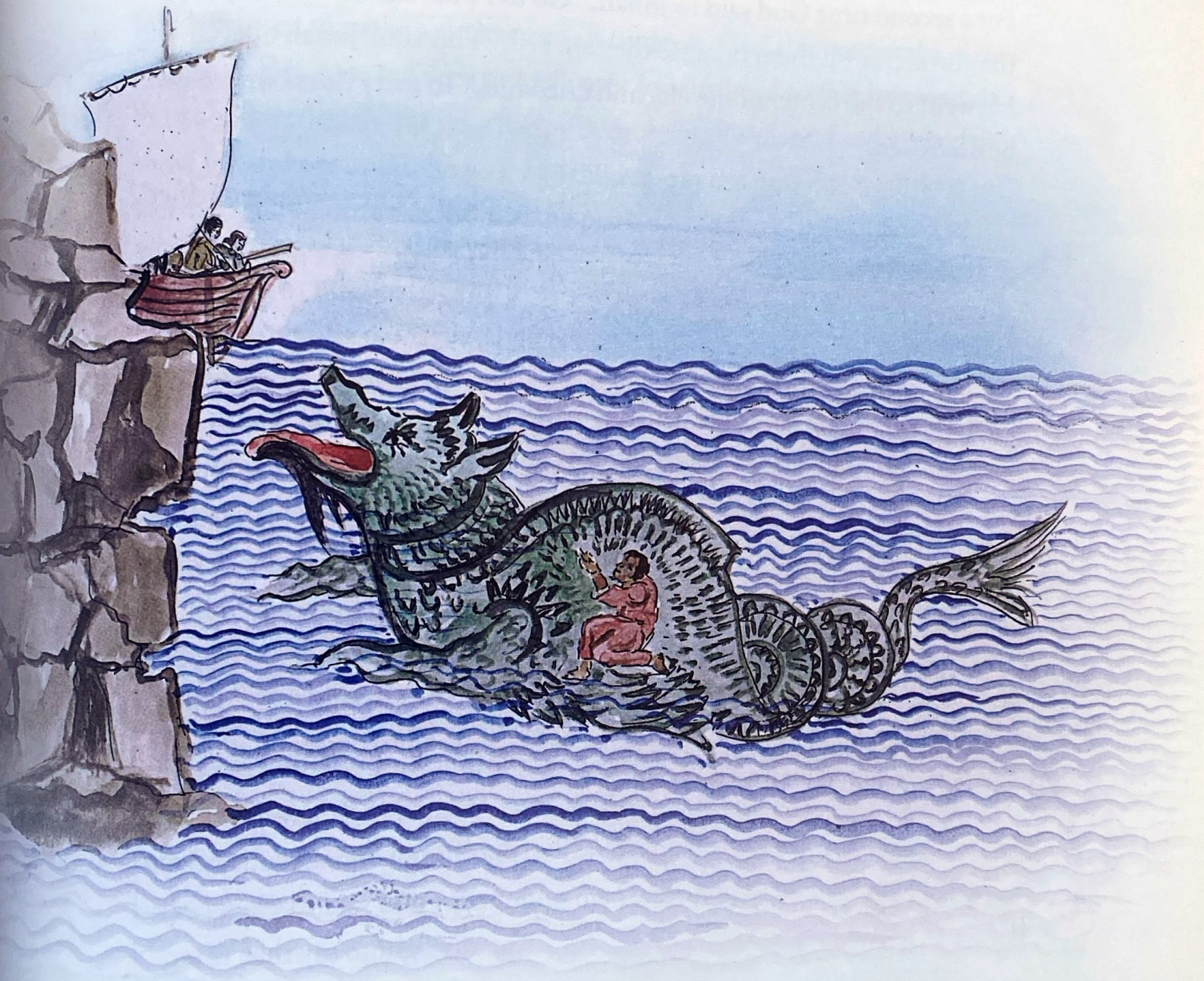
Jonah was a pious man. One day the Lord told him, "Go to the great city of Nineveh. There you will tell the people that I will punish them, for I have seen how evil they are." Jonah was afraid to go to Nineveh and so he did not obey. He went to the seashore and boarded a boat going in the opposite direction. He was trying to escape from God.

But God sent a storm. The sailors were terrified and cried out for help from God. In order to make the boat lighter they threw some of the cargo overboard. Jonah had gone down to the ship's hold and was already deeply asleep. The captain found him there and told him, "Get up and pray to your God for help; He might have pity on us and save us." Then Jonah said, "God will not listen to me. It is all my fault. I did not obey His orders, and I tried to get away from Him. That is why He sent this storm. Take me and throw me into the sea and it will calm down."

The sailors did not want to do that. The storm became even worse, and they prayed, "Lord, do not punish us with death! We will throw this man into the sea. You, O Lord, can do as You wish." They threw Jonah overboard and the storm ceased immediately.

God then sent a large fish that swallowed Jonah. He stayed in the fish's belly for three days and three nights. From inside the fish he prayed to the Lord. Then God ordered the fish to swim towards the coast and leave Jonah at the shore.

(Jonah 1-2)



Jonah goes to Nineveh

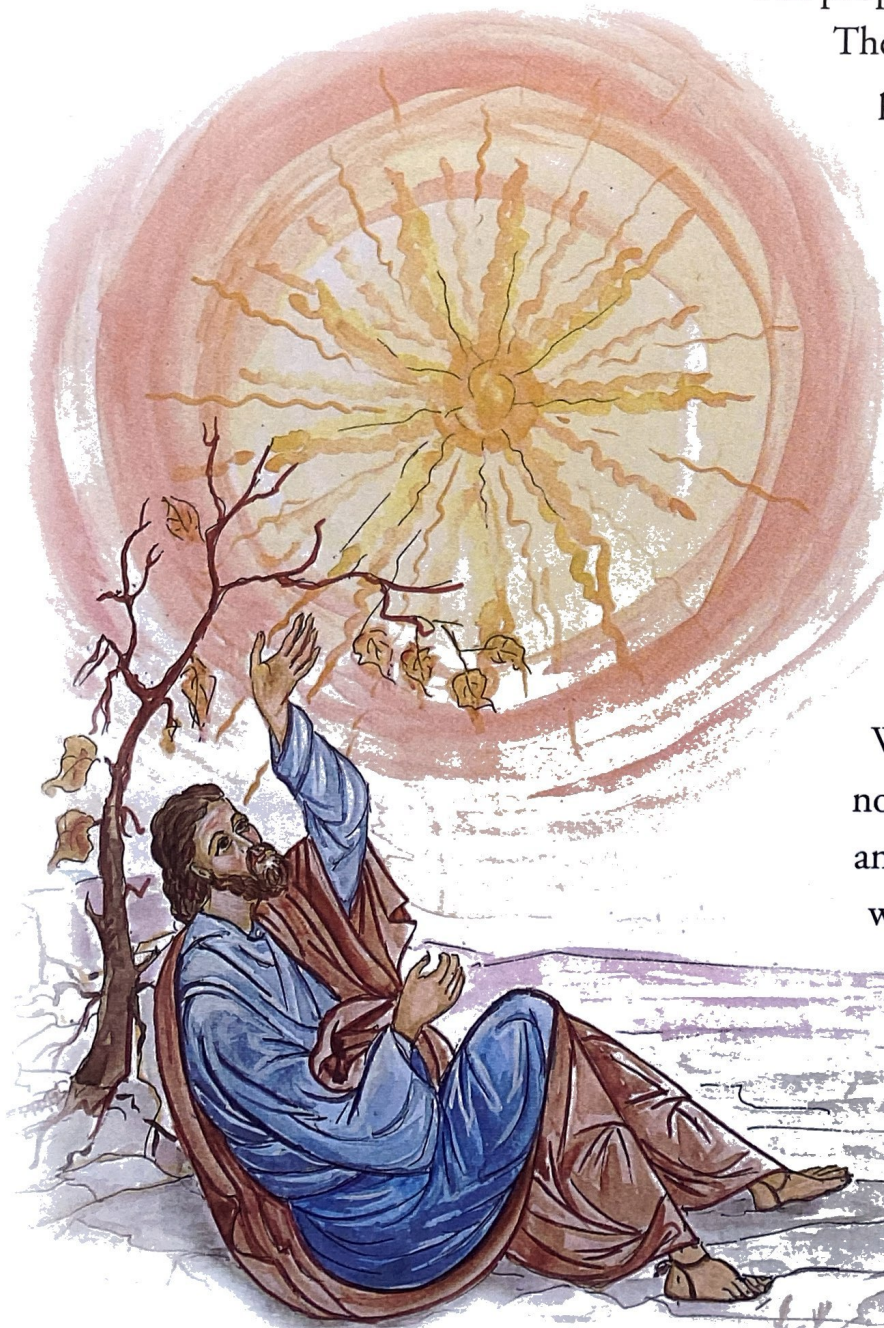
For a second time God said to Jonah, "Go to Nineveh and tell the people that I will punish them because they are evil." This time Jonah obeyed. He went to the center of the city and cried out, "In forty days Nineveh will be destroyed!"

The people of Nineveh were terrified.

They put on sackcloth and prayed to God to have mercy on them and promised to change their ways.

When God saw that the people of Nineveh had changed, He decided not to ruin the city, but Jonah did not know this, so he sat in front of the city and waited for God to destroy it.

When Jonah saw that nothing happened, he became angry and said to God, "I was right to say that You change Your mind easily. You have great patience and are always willing



to postpone Your punishment. This is why I did not want to come to Nineveh in the first place.” And God replied, “Is it right to be angry, Jonah?”

Jonah wanted to make a shelter and sit under it. God then ordered a plant to grow and it grew tall very quickly over Jonah’s head so that he could sit in its shadow. Jonah was very happy because of this plant. God wished to show Jonah how unfair he was. For this reason, the next day he ordered a worm to start eating the roots of the plant and so the plant withered up. When the sun came out, Jonah’s head started to burn. He felt exhausted and for this he complained to God.

God asked him then, “Is it right to be angry, Jonah, because of this plant? You neither put any effort into this plant nor helped it grow. But you are sorry for it. Shouldn’t I be sorry for Nineveh, a city so big, and pity its people and not let them die?

(Jonah 3-4)

Daniel and his friends

Several years later Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem with his army and conquered the city. He chose servants from among the Israelites who came from noble families. He wanted people who were smart enough to learn to read and write the Babylonian language. For three years the young men were taught all they needed to know in order to serve the king.

One of these young men was Daniel. He and his three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were chosen to serve the king. The king soon realized that these young men were much smarter than any of the others. They replied to all of Nebuchadnezzar's questions with wisdom and prudence.

(Daniel 1)

The three friends are thrown in the furnace

One day, King Nebuchadnezzar made a large gold statue and ordered, "All the people in my kingdom must bow down to this golden statue. All those who do not will be thrown into the furnace to die." Everyone bowed down to the statue except Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who would bow down only to the God of Israel.

When the king heard this, he ordered them to be brought before him to the palace and said, "How dare you disobey my orders? Do you think that your Lord can save you if I throw you into the furnace?" The three young men replied, "If God wishes, He can save us from you and from the furnace. But even if He does not, we will not bow down to your golden statue." Then Nebuchadnezzar became furious and ordered the three of them to be thrown into the furnace. But God sent an angel who protected them from the fire. The king was terribly upset and cried out, "Didn't we throw three men into the furnace? Why do I see four men walking around inside without getting burned?"

Then the king ordered the furnace to be opened, and the three young men came out completely unharmed.

(Daniel 3)



Daniel in the lion's den

Nebuchadnezzar died and another king, Darius, ascended to the throne. One of the most important men in his kingdom was Daniel, and Darius wanted to give him even greater power. The other men at court were jealous of Daniel and wanted to harm him. They knew that Daniel prayed only to the God of Israel and told the king, "Give an order that for forty days no one should be allowed to pray to any god or man except you, king Darius. All those who will not obey will be thrown to the lions." They knew that when the king gave an order it could not be changed, because it was the law.

The king agreed and announced the order to the whole kingdom. Now, Daniel often prayed to God: three times a day he kneeled and prayed for protection and blessings. Even after the king's decree he continued to pray.

When his enemies saw this they went to the king and said, "Daniel does not obey your order. He prays to his God three times a day." The king was sad. He liked Daniel and wanted to forgive him. But Daniel's enemies said, "You know, O King, that none of your orders can be changed."

So King Darius had to throw Daniel into the pit with the hungry lions. The king could not sleep at all that night. In the morning, he got up very early and rushed to the lions' pit. He cried out with a sad voice, "Daniel, did your Lord manage to save you from the lions?" Then Daniel replied, "My Lord has sent His angel to shut the mouth of the lions so they could not harm me, for I am innocent and have done nothing wrong." Then the king was very pleased and ordered Daniel to be taken out of the pit.

(Daniel 6)



Daniel tells of the coming of the Savior

Daniel had a vision that foretold the coming of the Savior:

“On the clouds of heaven I saw someone coming who looked like a man; he was brought before the Pre-eternal God. He was given power and glory and kingship so that all people of every nationality and language will serve him. His leadership will be eternal and his kingdom will never be destroyed.”

(Daniel 7)



The New Testament



Expecting the Savior

A long time passed. The Israelites were still expecting the king that God had promised to them. All the prophets had said that this king would be different from any other. He was going to save the Israelites from their enemies and bring peace and freedom. The Israelites called this king that the Lord had promised to them the Messiah.

But their land was still occupied by foreign soldiers who belonged to the great Roman Empire. Caesar, who lived in Rome, was the most powerful man in the whole world. He had appointed Herod as the king of Judea, which was part of the land of Israel. The Israelites who lived in Judea were called Jews. The Jews, however, didn't like Herod. They were eagerly expecting the Messiah who was going to set them free.

Elizabeth and Zechariah

In those days, Zechariah was a priest in the temple of Jerusalem. Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth were very old and they had no children.

One day Zechariah went to the temple. There were many people standing and praying in front of the temple. Only the priest was allowed to go into the temple in order to pray for the people and to burn incense. When Zechariah went inside and stood in front of the altar, an angel suddenly appeared in front of him. He was frightened.



But the angel told him, “Don’t be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer; your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son and you are going to call him John. When he grows old he is going to tell people, “Get ready! God is sending the Messiah to you!”

“My wife Elizabeth and I are very old. We cannot have any children now,” said Zechariah to the angel.

The angel answered, “I am Gabriel, and I am close to God. He sent me to talk to you and to bring you this good news. But because you didn’t believe my words, from this moment on you will not be able to speak until the day the child is born.”

In the meantime the people outside had been waiting for Zechariah to come out of the temple and bless them. They were worried because he was taking so long. But when he came out and could not speak, they all understood that he had seen a vision in the temple.

Zechariah went back home. Soon enough, Elizabeth realized that she was going to have a child. She was very happy and said, “The Lord did not forget me! He gave me this child.”

(Luke 1)

The Angel visits Mary

In the town of Nazareth lived a young girl named Mary. She was engaged to marry a man named Joseph.

One day, an angel appeared to Mary and said, "Greetings to you who are favored by the grace of God!" Mary was shocked, but the angel told her, "Don't be afraid, Mary. You will have a son and you will call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High."



But Mary asked, "How can this happen to me, since I am not yet married to a man?"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of God will work this miracle. This is why the holy child you are going to bear will be called the Son of God. Know that your cousin Elizabeth is also going to have a child, although she is very old. Nothing is impossible for God."

Then Mary said, "I am a servant of the Lord. Let His will be done to me as you have said."

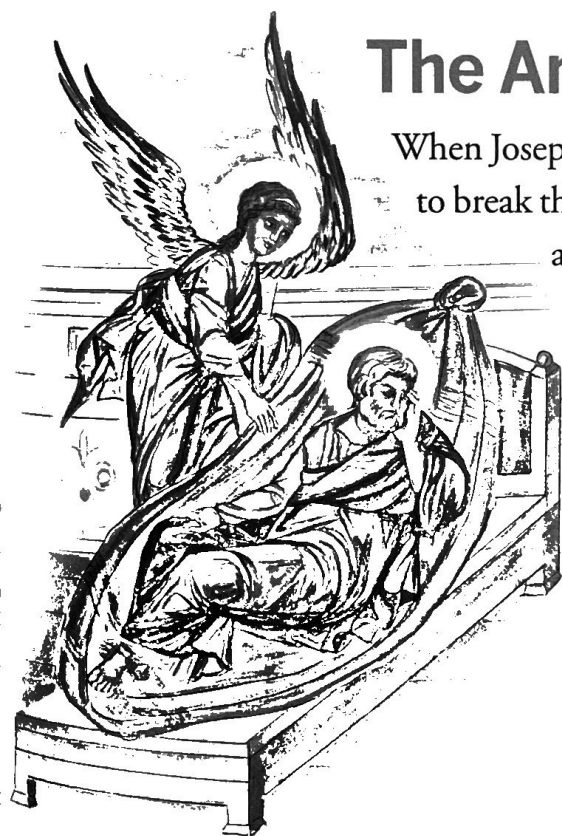
(Luke 1)

The Angel visits Joseph

When Joseph heard that Mary was pregnant, he wanted to break the engagement. But an angel from God appeared to him while he was sleeping and said to him, "Joseph, don't be afraid to take Mary to your home, because the child she is going to bear is the Son of God. You will call him Jesus, which means 'God saves.' For the Lord will save His people through Him."

When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel had said and took Mary into his home.

(Matthew 1)





Mary visits Elizabeth

Soon after this, Mary went to visit her cousin Elizabeth. She went to Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. As soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby in her womb leaped for joy. Then Elizabeth exclaimed with a loud voice, "Mary, you are blessed by the Lord, and blessed is the child you will bear. Yes, you are the mother of the One Who is going to save the whole people of Israel. I know this because when I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. You must be happy to know that everything is going to be done as the Lord has said to you."

Then Mary started praising God:

"My soul glorifies the Lord with joy.

His love never ends.

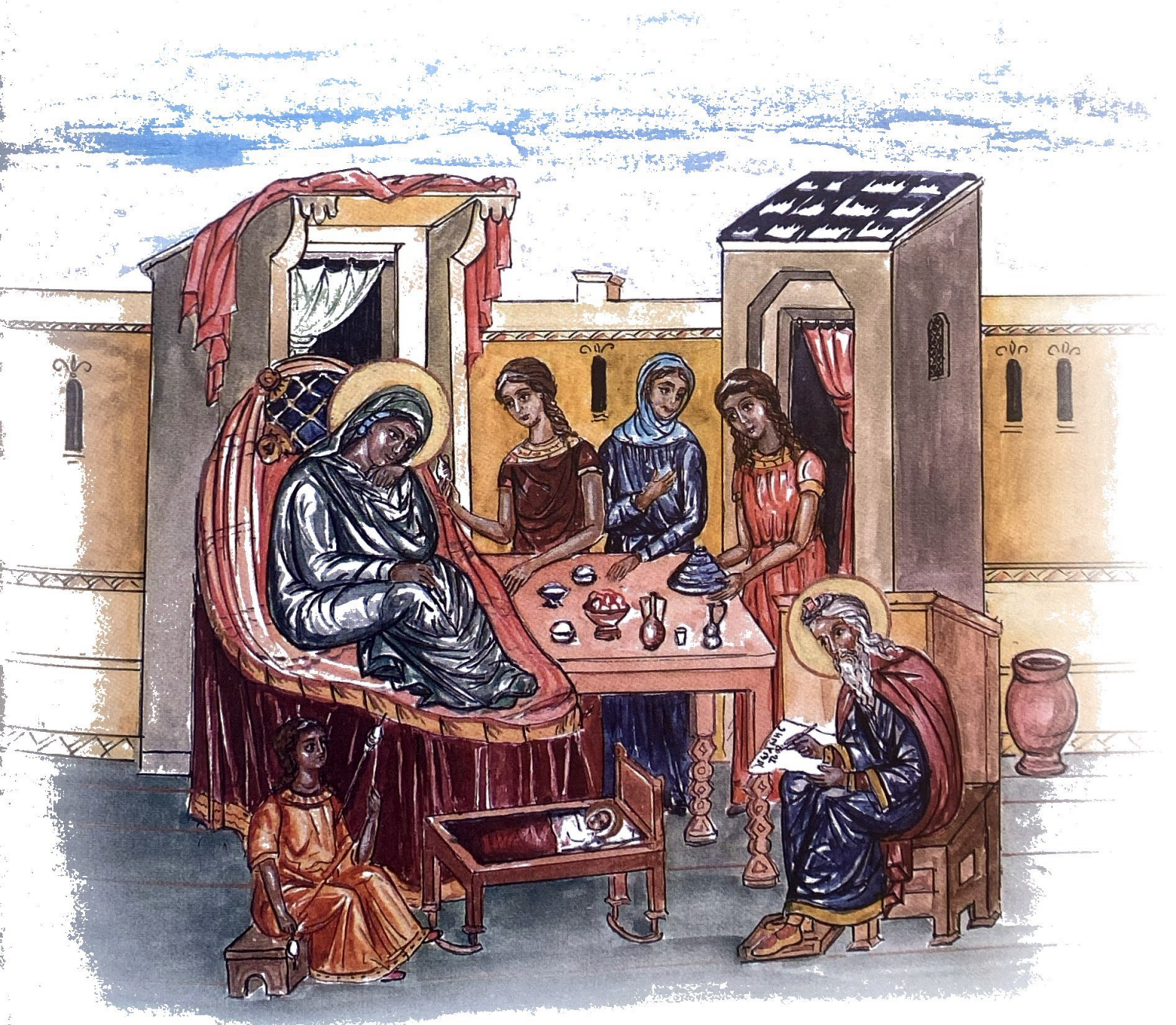
He fulfills the promise He gave to people and sends their Savior."

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months and then returned home to Joseph.

(Luke 1)

The birth of John

Elizabeth soon gave birth to her child. It was a boy, as the angel had promised. The neighbors and relatives came to see the child and to rejoice with Elizabeth. "What will his name be?" they asked Elizabeth. "Surely it will be Zechariah, after his father." But Elizabeth answered, "No, his name will be John." "But none of your relatives has this name," they said. Then they asked Zechariah what name he would like to give to the child.



Zechariah took a small tablet and wrote, “John will be his name.” As soon as he wrote it, Zechariah was able to speak again. Then he started praising and thanking God.

All the neighbors were amazed and astonished. They talked about it everywhere and they asked each other, “What is this boy going to be like?”
(Luke 1)

The birth of Jesus

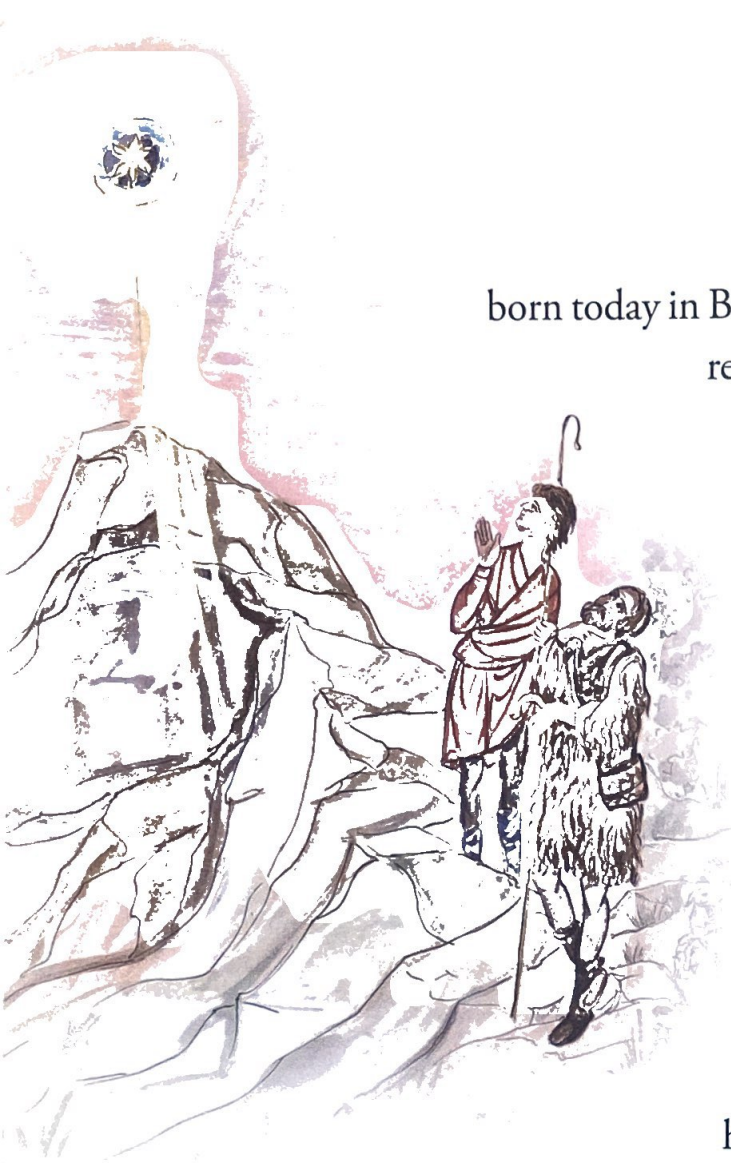
In those days the Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus ordered, “Everyone in my empire must have his name written down. All the names must be on a list so that taxes can be collected. Everyone must go to his home town to register.”

So Joseph had to go to Bethlehem, the city of David, because he was from the family of King David. He and Mary started on their long journey. When they got to Bethlehem there was no room for them to stay at the inn. The small town was very crowded. They finally found a space in a stable.

That night Mary gave birth to her child, a boy. She wrapped Him in cloths and placed Him in a manger.

There were some shepherds nearby, living out in the fields and taking care of their sheep. Suddenly, a light shone around them and an angel appeared before them. The shepherds were frightened but the angel told them, “Do not be afraid! I bring you good news. The Lord has sent the Savior He promised to you – and He is Christ, the Lord. He was





born today in Bethlehem. This will be the sign for you to recognize Him: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

Suddenly, a great company of angels appeared, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth; love and salvation to all people.”

The shepherds ran to Bethlehem. There they found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. The shepherds told them what the angel had said about the child. Mary kept all these words in her heart and thought deeply about them.

The shepherds went back to their sheep, praising God for everything they had seen and heard.

Mary and Joseph named the child Jesus, as the angel had told them.

(Luke 2)

The wise men

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, three wise men from the East came to Jerusalem. They went to King Herod’s palace and asked, “Where is the newborn king? We have seen His star rising and we have come to worship Him.”



When Herod heard this, he was very upset because he did not want anyone else to be the king. So he asked all the wise people who knew the Holy Scriptures, "Where is the Messiah going to be born? In which town will the promised king be born?" They answered, "In Bethlehem of Judea, according the prophets." Herod called the three wise men to him secretly. He wanted to know when the star had first appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem and told them, "When you find the child, let me know. I will come to worship Him, too."



The wise men followed the star and were led to Bethlehem. The star was over the place where Jesus was. The wise men went in, and there they found the baby with Mary, His mother. They knelt down and worshipped Him. Then they offered precious gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

After this, they left for their country by another road, because God had warned them in a dream not to go back to Herod.

(Matthew 2)

Simeon and Anna

When Jesus was forty days old, Mary and Joseph brought Him to the temple in Jerusalem. They wanted to thank God for the child and dedicate Him to God.

In the temple there was an old man named Simeon. God had long ago promised him, “You will not die before you see with your own eyes the Messiah I have promised you.”

When Mary and Joseph came in with the child, Simeon took the child in his arms and said, “Now, Lord, I can die in peace because You have kept Your promise. I have seen with my own eyes the Savior You sent for all people!”



There was also a woman in the temple who was a prophet. Her name was Anna. She was very old and she lived only for the Lord. When she saw Jesus, she praised and thanked God saying, "This child will save all people."

(Luke 2)

The escape to Egypt

King Herod did not forget what the wise men had said about the king born in Bethlehem. He did not want another king in his land. So when the wise men did not return, he decided to send soldiers to kill the child.

Then God sent to Joseph an angel, who appeared in a dream and told him, "Get up immediately; take the child and His mother and go away to Egypt, because Herod plans to kill Him."



Joseph got up immediately, and took the child and His mother and left for Egypt during the night. They stayed there until King Herod died.

Then an angel again came to Joseph in a dream and told him, "Get up; take the child and His mother and go back to the land of Israel. Those who wanted to kill the child are dead."

So Joseph and Mary returned to their country with Jesus. They settled in Nazareth and Jesus grew up there.

(Matthew 2)

Jesus comes to the temple

Every year Joseph and Mary went to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast. This feast was to remind the Israelites of the release of their ancestors from slavery in Egypt.

When Jesus was twelve years old, He went to Jerusalem for the first time with His parents for the Passover Feast. They traveled with many friends and relatives, too.

When the Feast was over and everybody started back home, Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. When Joseph and Mary could not find Him, they thought, "He will surely be with our relatives." That evening they started looking for Him everywhere. But they still could not find Him, so they went back to Jerusalem to look for Him.

After three days, they found Him in the temple. He was sitting among the teachers of the law and listening to them talk about God. He asked His own questions and when the teachers asked Him questions, He knew the answers. All who heard Him were amazed at His intelligence and His responses.

When His mother saw Him, she ran to Him and said, "My son, why have You done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for You and we have been very worried!" "Why have you been looking for Me?" said Jesus. "Don't you know that I have to be in My Father's house?" But they did not understand what He meant.



Jesus went back to Nazareth with them obediently, but His mother never forgot the words Jesus had said to her in the temple. Jesus continued to grow in body and in wisdom, and gained favor both with God and with the people around Him.

(Luke 2)

John the Baptist

John, the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, had grown up at the same time and was living in the desert because God had instructed him to go there. John was preaching to the people, “Repent and be baptized, and God will forgive your sins!”

John’s clothes were made of camel hair and he wore a leather belt. He ate locusts and wild honey. Many people came from Jerusalem and from all over the country to listen to what he said about God.

John urged them, “Change your lives. Show your change with your deeds.” People asked him, “What should we do?” John said, “He who has two shirts must give one away to someone who has none. And whoever has food must share it with whoever is hungry.”

Many people went to John and confessed their sins, telling him everything they had done that was against the will of God. John baptized them in the Jordan River saying, “I am baptizing you with water, but someone is coming after me who is much greater than I am. I am not worthy even to untie His sandals. When He comes, He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

(Matthew 3; Luke 3)

The Baptism of Jesus

One day Jesus came to the Jordan River. He wanted to be baptized by John. But John did not want to baptize Him and said, "I need to be baptized by You and You have come to me?" But Jesus answered, "This is the will of God." Then John agreed and baptized Him.

When Jesus came out of the water, the heavens opened above Him. John saw the Spirit of God like a dove coming down upon Him. Then a voice from heaven was heard saying, "This is My beloved Son. He is My chosen one."

(Matthew 3)

John pointed to Jesus and said,

"This is the One Who takes away the sin of the world.

He redeems people and saves them.

When He was baptized I saw the Spirit like a dove coming down from heaven and remaining on Him.

I know that Jesus is the Son of God."

(John 1)

Then Jesus said,

I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness but will have the light that brings life.

(John 8)



Jesus is tempted by the devil

After Jesus was baptized, God led Him to the desert. For forty days He ate nothing at all, and after that He was very hungry.

The devil came and tempted Him saying, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to turn into bread." But Jesus answered, "The Scripture says, 'Man cannot live on bread alone, but by every word from the mouth of God'."



Then the devil took Him to the highest point of the temple in Jerusalem and said, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down, because the Scripture says ‘God will send his angels to protect You’.” But Jesus said, “The Scripture also says, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test’.”

The devil led Him to a high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in all their greatness. “I will give all this to You if You will only kneel down and worship me,” he said. But Jesus answered, “Go away, Satan! The Scripture is clear. ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only!’”

Then the devil left, and God’s angels came to serve Jesus.

(Matthew 4)

Jesus in the synagogue

Jesus returned to Nazareth. On Saturday, the Sabbath Day, He went as usual to the synagogue. There the Jews prayed and read the Scriptures.

Jesus was given the book of Isaiah and He read aloud from it, “God has sent Me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the return of sight to the blind.” Then Jesus said, “The prophecy you have just heard has come true today.”

All the people agreed with Him, and they all were amazed at His words.

(Luke 4)

Jesus and His disciples

Jesus left Nazareth and went to Capernaum, a fishing village by the Sea of Galilee.

Many people came to Him to listen to the word of God. Jesus stood on the beach and people crowded around Him.

There were two fishing boats pulled up on the beach. The fishermen were washing their nets nearby. One of them was Simon Peter. Jesus said to him, "Let Me get into your boat. Then push it off a little way from the shore, so I can speak to the people. Then everyone will be able to see Me and hear Me." Jesus sat in the fishing boat and started teaching the people from there. When He was done He said to Peter, "Go into deeper water with your friends and put your nets out to catch fish." Peter answered, "We have been fishing all night and we have not caught anything. But since You say so, we will try one more time." When they let down their nets, they caught such a large number of fish that the nets began to tear. They called the fishermen from the other boat to come and help. They came closer and filled the two boats with so many fish that the boats started to sink.





Peter was very frightened by what had happened. He fell on his knees before Jesus and said, "You should not be in my boat, Lord, because I am a sinful man." He said this because he was amazed at the large number of fish they had caught, and the other fishermen felt the same way, too.

But Jesus said, "Don't be afraid. You and the other fishermen will become My helpers. You will come with Me and help bring to other people the good news that God loves them."

Then the fishermen pulled their boats up to the shore, left everything, and followed Jesus.

Jesus called others to Him, too. These twelve men became His disciples and went everywhere with Jesus.

(Luke 5)

The wedding in Cana

There was a wedding in Cana, a town in Galilee, and Jesus and the disciples were invited. Jesus' mother was there, too. Everybody was happy, eating delicious food and drinking good wine. But then the host ran out of wine.

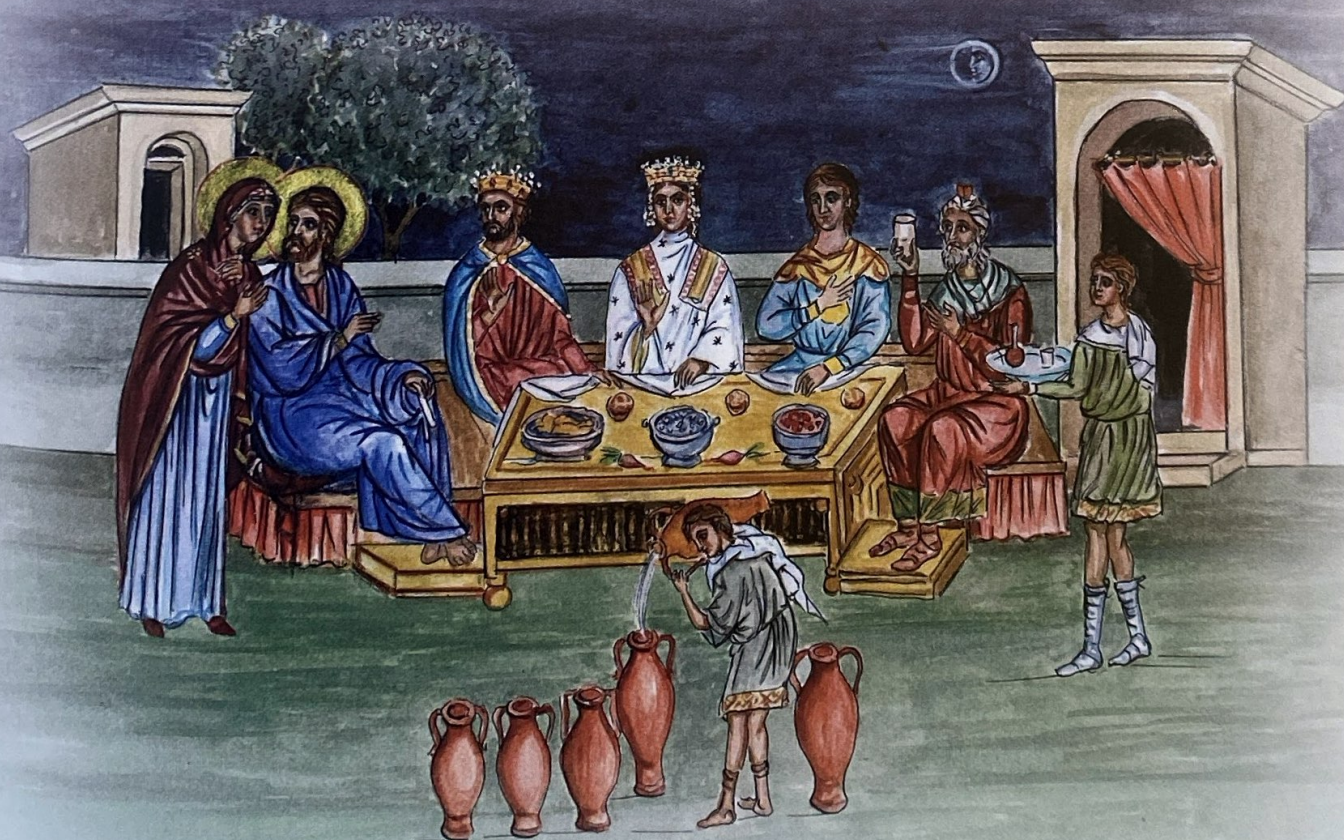
Jesus' mother said to Him, "They have no more wine." He answered, "That has nothing to do with us. My time has not yet come."

Then His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever He tells you."

Jesus went outside, where six large stone water jars stood. He said to the servants, "Fill these jars with water." They filled them to the very top. Jesus said, "Take some of it out now and give it to the man in charge to taste." The host did not know that the stone jars had been filled with water. Only the servants knew that. He tasted the water that had been turned into wine and said to the bridegroom, "Everyone serves the best wine first and then the ordinary wine. But you have kept the best wine until now."

The wedding in Cana was Jesus' first miracle. In this way He revealed His glory and His disciples believed in Him.

(John 2)





Jesus heals a paralyzed man

One day Jesus came to Capernaum, and as soon as the news spread that He was at certain house, many people gathered there. It was so crowded that there was no room left for anyone else, not even outside in front of the door. Everyone was listening to Jesus talk about God.

Four men arrived, carrying their very sick friend on a little bed. He could not walk or even move because he was paralyzed. His friends wanted to bring him to Jesus, but they couldn't get in the door because of the crowd. So the four men climbed onto the roof of the house and made a hole over the place where Jesus was, and they used ropes to let down the bed with the paralyzed man.

When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralyzed man, "My son, your sins are forgiven."

Some people who were there knew the religious laws very well, and when they heard what Jesus said they thought, "He can't talk like this. Only God can forgive a person's sins."

Jesus understood at once what they were thinking and He said, "What would be easier to say to the paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or, 'Get up, take your bed and walk'? But I want you to know that I have the authority to forgive sins." Then He said to the paralyzed man, "Get up, take your bed and go home." The man got up immediately, picked up his bed, and walked out in front of everybody.

Everybody was amazed and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

(Mark 2)

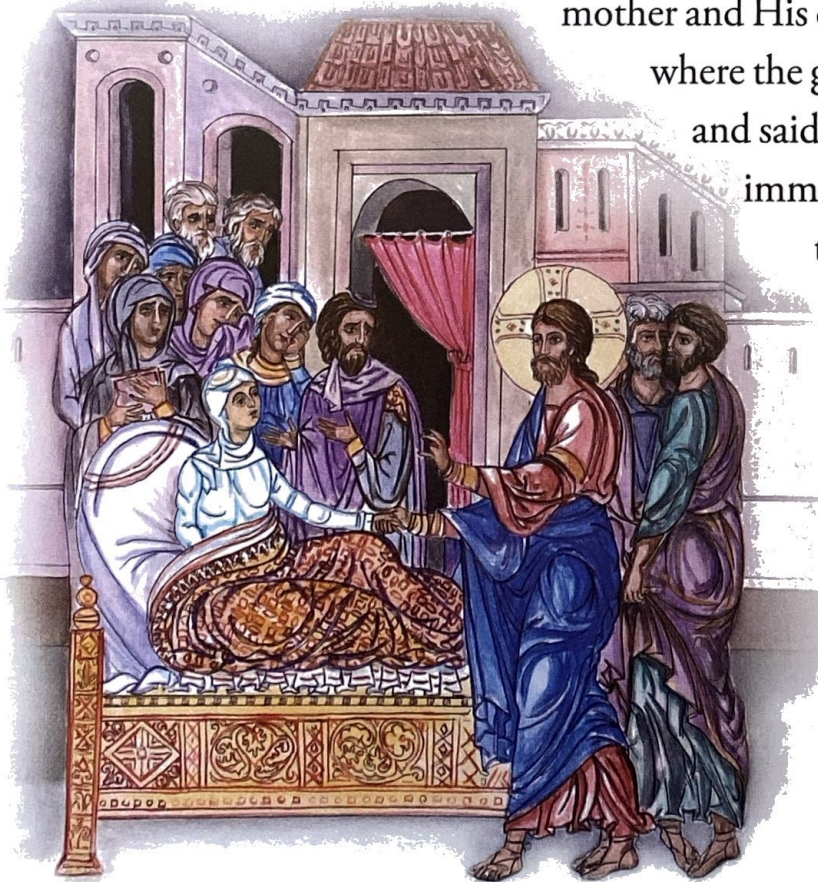
Jesus and the daughter of Jairus

Once, a man came to see Jesus. His name was Jairus and he was an important person. Jairus knelt down at Jesus' feet and begged Him earnestly, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and place Your hands on her so that she will get well and live." So Jesus went with him to see the girl, who was twelve years old.

On the way, some people from Jairus' house found them and said, "Your daughter is dead. Don't bother Jesus any more." But Jesus said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid, only believe." And He didn't let anyone follow Him, except three of His disciples: Peter, James, and John. They came to the house and Jesus saw that there was a lot of confusion and many people crying loudly. He went inside and asked them, "Why is there all this noise and crying? The girl is not dead, she is only sleeping." They laughed at Him. But He made everyone leave, and He and the girl's father and mother and His disciples went into the room

where the girl was. He took her hand in His and said to her, "Get up!" The girl got up immediately and walked. Everyone in the room was shocked. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat.

(Mark 5)





Jesus and the centurion of Capernaum

Jesus once went to Capernaum. An officer of the Roman army, a centurion, met Him there and begged, “Lord, my servant is sick in bed at home. He is paralyzed and suffering very much.”

“I will come and heal him,” said Jesus. But the centurion said, “Lord, I do not deserve to have You come into my house. Just say the word and my servant will be healed. I am in charge of many soldiers and when I say to one ‘Go!’ he goes, and to the other ‘Come!’ he comes, and to another ‘Do this!’ he does it. If You just say the word, my servant will be healed.”

When Jesus heard him, He was amazed and said to those who were following Him, "I tell you, I have not found such faith, not even in Israel."

Then He said to the centurion, "Go home, and what you believe will be done for you." The servant was healed at once.

(Matthew 8)

Jesus and the storm

Another time, Jesus was with His disciples by the Sea of Galilee. When it began to get dark, He said to them, "Let us cross to the other side of the lake." They got into a small boat and started across.

Jesus was tired and fell asleep. While He was sleeping, a windstorm struck the lake and so many large waves were crashing against the boat that it was beginning to fill with water.

The disciples were very frightened. They woke Jesus and told Him, "Teacher, don't you care that we are about to drown?" Jesus immediately got up and ordered the wind to settle down and said to the sea, "Be quiet!" Then the wind stopped blowing and the waves subsided.

And Jesus said to His disciples, "Why were you so afraid? Don't you still have faith?"

Then they were even more afraid than they were during the storm and said to each other, "Who is this man that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"
(Mark 4)



Jesus and John

John the Baptist had been arrested and thrown into prison by King Herod. The king was angry with John because John told the king that he had done evil things. While John was in prison, he heard about Jesus going around talking about God and healing the sick. He sent two disciples to ask Him, "Are you the expected Messiah, or must we wait for somebody else?"

Jesus answered, "Go tell John what you hear and see. Blind people can now see and lame people can now walk, dead people are alive again, and the poor accept the good news. Blessed are those who trust in Me."



Herod kept John in prison for a long time so that he could not talk to people anymore. Later, he sent his soldiers to cut off John's head.

(Matthew 11-14)

The Sermon on the Mount

Many people came to Jesus because they wanted to hear what He said about God. One day, Jesus went up on a mountain and began talking to those who came to hear Him. He was telling them how God wants people to live.

Love your enemies

Jesus began, "You have heard that the commandment was given, 'Love your neighbor.' But I tell you, love your enemies. Pray for those who want to hurt you. By doing this you show that you are children of God, your heavenly Father. He makes the sun rise on both good people and bad people. He sends the rain to those who do right and to those who do evil. If you love only the people who love you, why should God reward you? And if you are only nice to your friends, then what is the difference between you and the others? Doesn't that make you the same as those who don't know God?"

(Matthew 5)

True prayer

Jesus continued, “When you pray, do not be like the people who make an act of standing and praying in front of everybody in order to be seen. When you want to pray, you must go to the most private room of the house, close the door and pray to your heavenly Father. He can see even your secret deeds.”

“God is your heavenly Father. He knows what you need even before you ask Him. So when you pray, you don’t need to babble. This is how you should pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.

Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

and forgive us our trespasses

as we forgive those who trespass against us;

and lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.”

(Matthew 6)



The cares of life

Jesus also said, "Don't worry about your life -- what to eat, what to drink, what to wear. Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store things in barns, and still your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you much more precious than they are?"

"Why do you worry so much about your clothes? Look at how the wild flowers grow in the meadows. They don't work at all. But I tell you, not even Solomon in all his majesty was dressed as well. But if God dresses so beautifully the wild flowers that get thrown into the fire, will He not care much more for you?"

"Your heavenly Father knows very well what you need. So first of all seek the kingdom of God and for His will to be done, and everything else will follow."

(Matthew 6)



Trust in God

Jesus continued, "Ask and you will receive what you ask for, seek and you will find what you are looking for, knock and the door will be opened for you."

"If your child asks for bread, would you give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, would you give him a snake? Just as you know how to give good things to your children, even more will your heavenly Father give what is good to those who ask."

(Matthew 7)

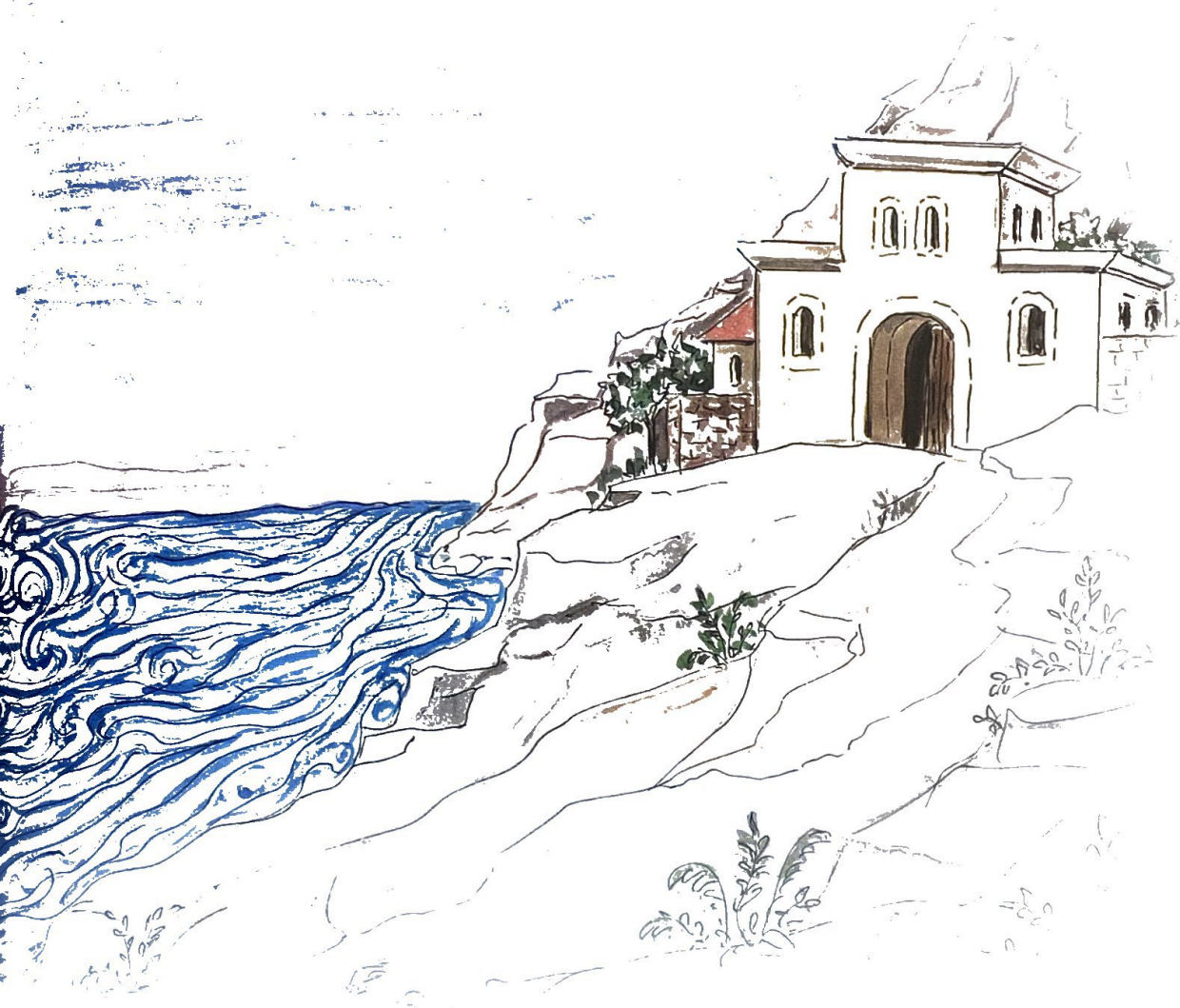
The parable of the two houses

Jesus finished speaking with these words, "Anyone who hears My words and obeys them is like the wise man who built his house on a rock. When the rain came, the rivers flooded and the winds beat against the house, but the house did not fall down because it was built on a rock."

"But anyone who hears My words and does not obey them is like the foolish man who built his house on the sand. When the rain came, the rivers flooded and the winds beat against the house, and the house fell down so that there was nothing left."

(Matthew 7)





Jesus blesses the children

While Jesus was teaching, children were brought to Him so that He might bless them. But the disciples scolded the adults for bringing the children. When Jesus saw this, He was upset and said, "Let the children come to Me. Do not stop them, because the kingdom of God belongs to those who are like these children. I tell you that anyone who will not accept the kingdom of God as a child will not get into it." And He took the children in His arms and blessed them, putting His hand on their heads.

(Mark 10)





Who is the greatest?

The disciples wanted to know which one of them was the greatest. Jesus understood their thoughts. He had a child stand in front of them and said, "Anyone who accepts this child in My name, accepts Me. And anyone who accepts Me, accepts the One who sent Me to the world: My heavenly Father. So remember that whoever is the most humble among you is the greatest."

(Luke 9)

Jesus and the Sabbath

It was a Saturday, the Sabbath Day, the last day of the week when none of the Israelites worked. When God made the world He named the seventh day as a day of rest, so no one should work on the Sabbath.

Jesus and the disciples were walking through some wheat fields. As they walked, the disciples felt hungry and started picking the heads of wheat and eating the seeds.

There was a group of people called the Pharisees who believed that they were better than everybody else. Some of them noticed what the disciples were doing and said to Jesus, "Look at what Your disciples do on the Sabbath! They are picking the stalks of wheat. This is forbidden on the Sabbath because it is a kind of work."

Jesus answered, "Haven't you ever read the Scriptures about when King David and his men were hungry? He went into the house of God and ate the loaves of bread that had been offered to God. This is forbidden. Only the priests are allowed to eat this bread. But David ate the bread and gave some to his men as well. You must know that Sabbath was made for men and not men for the Sabbath."

Jesus went again to the synagogue, the place where people went on the Sabbath to pray. Some of the Pharisees who didn't like Jesus were there, too. They didn't like Jesus' teachings and wanted to make Him look bad, so they watched very carefully everything Jesus did. They were hoping that He would do something that was forbidden so that they could make trouble for Him.



There was a man in the synagogue who could not move his hand because it was paralyzed. Jesus said to the man, "Get up and stand here in front of everyone." Then He asked the Pharisees, "What is allowed to be done on the Sabbath, good or evil? To save a life or let it die?" Nobody answered. Jesus looked around angrily. He was sorry for their hard hearts. He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." The man stretched out his hand and it was healed.

Then the Pharisees left. They wanted to get rid of Jesus, so they had a meeting to plan how they were going to kill Him.

(Mark 2-3)

The Good Samaritan

One day Jesus told this story:

A man was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho when he was attacked by robbers. They beat him up, took all of his belongings, and left him on the road half dead.

A priest from the temple of Jerusalem happened to be going down the same road. He saw the wounded man, but he walked by without doing anything.

Later, a servant from the temple came along the same road, too. He also saw the wounded man, but he walked by without helping at all.

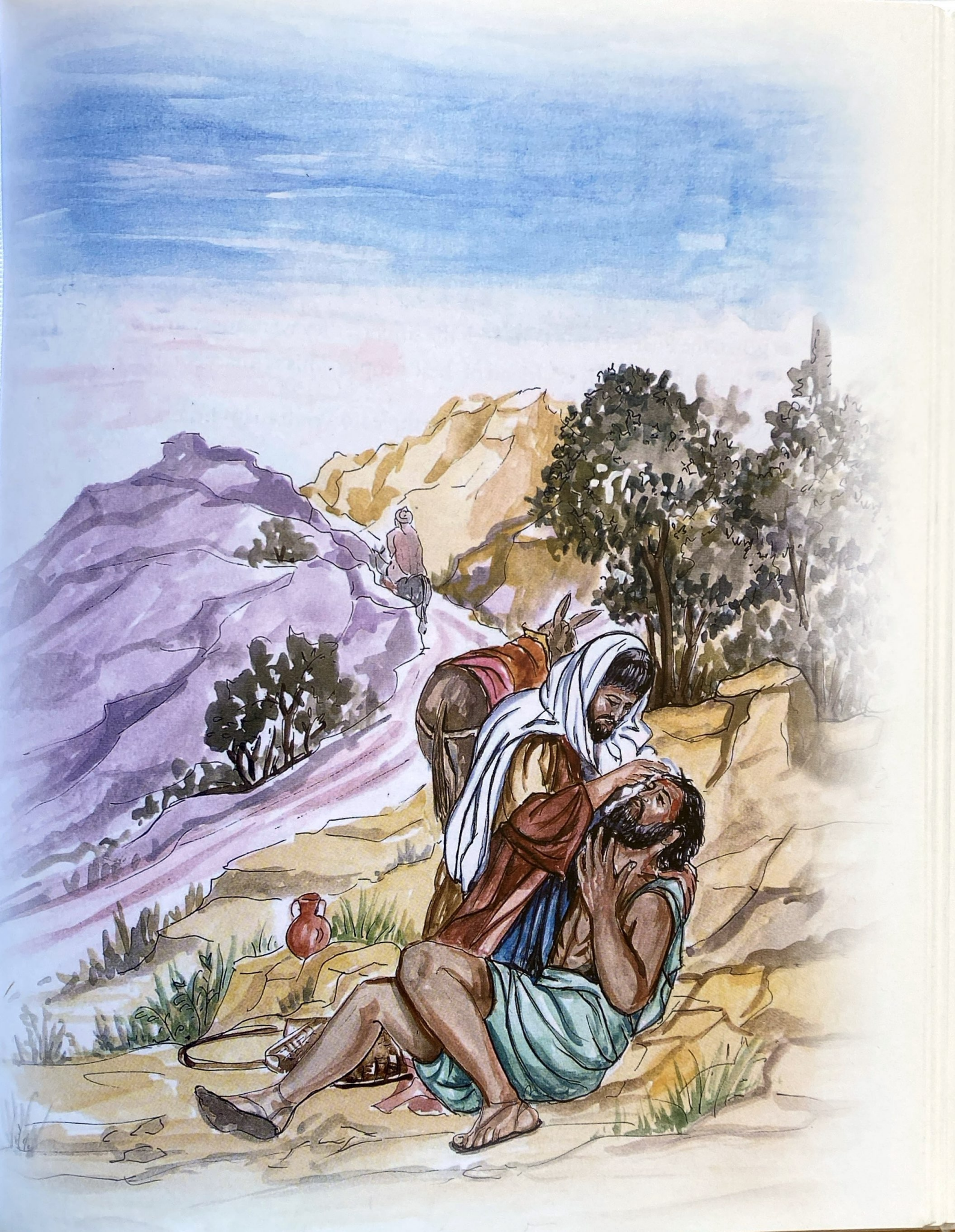
Then a man from Samaria came by. People from Jerusalem didn't like Samaritans; in fact, they hated Samaritans and looked down on them.

But when this Samaritan noticed the wounded man, he felt sorry for him. He went right over to him, washed his wounds, and bandaged them well. Then he put the man on his own donkey and brought him to the nearest inn. He paid for a room and put the wounded man in bed and took care of him.

The next day the Samaritan had to leave for the rest of his trip. So he gave two silver coins to the innkeeper and said, "Take good care of this man, and if you spend more I will pay you when I come back."

When Jesus finished this story, He said, "Let this Samaritan be an example to you. You must do the same."

(Luke 10)



God wants to save everyone

Jesus had many friends. Among them were sinful people whom the Pharisees despised. But Jesus didn't reject anyone, because He knew that God loves everyone and rejoices when they come to Him.

When the Pharisees saw Jesus with the sinners, they were angry and said, "Is it possible that He is a friend of these people? This is unacceptable!"

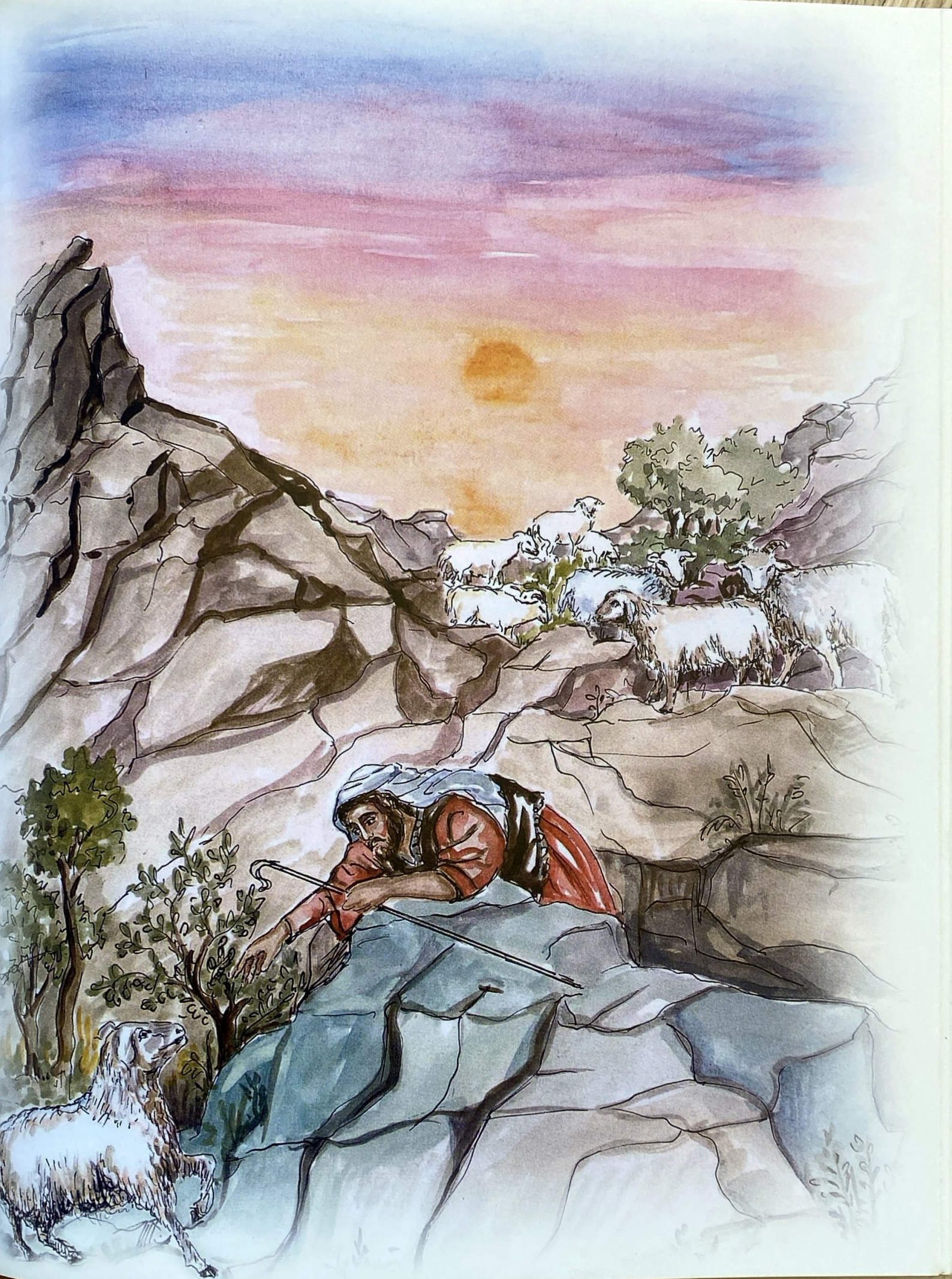
When Jesus heard them, He told these three stories to answer them:

The lost sheep

A man had a hundred sheep, and he counted them every night. One night he realized that one was missing. He left the other ninety-nine in the fold and went out looking for the one lost sheep.

The man looked all over. He gave no thought to how hard it would be to find his sheep. Finally he found it. He was so glad! He took it on his shoulders and brought it home. He called all his friends and neighbors and said, "Rejoice with me, because I have found my lost sheep." Jesus said to those who were listening, "God rejoices in the same way when someone who has gone away from Him comes back again."

(Luke 15)





The lost coin

There once was a woman who had ten silver coins. One day she lost one of them. She lit a lamp and started going through the whole house, looking carefully everywhere. She finally found the coin. Then she called all her friends and neighbors and said to them, "Rejoice with me, because I have found the silver coin that I lost!"

Jesus said again to all those who were listening to Him, "I promise you that in the same way the angels of God are happy when someone who is lost to God returns again and begins a new life."

(Luke 15)

The prodigal son

Jesus told a third story:

There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, "Father, give me right now the part of your property that will belong to me later." And the father divided the property between his sons. A few days later the younger son packed up everything and left for a faraway country. There he spent everything living wildly and after a while all his money was gone.

When he had nothing left, a great famine spread over the country and nobody had anything to eat. The young man was very hungry, so he went to work for a farmer in that faraway country and was sent out into the fields to take care of the pigs. He would have been happy to eat even the pigs' food, but nobody gave him anything.

He finally came to his senses and said, "I know that my father's workers have more than enough to eat, and here I am starving to death! I will get up and go to my father and say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against God and against you. I don't deserve to be called your son anymore. Put me to work for you as one of your workers'."

So he began the trip back to his father. When he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. The father felt bad for his son and ran to hug and kiss him. Then his son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against God and against you and I don't deserve to be your son." But before he could continue and ask for a job, his father turned to the servants and said, "Quickly, bring the best clothes and dress him. Put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. Get the best calf and prepare it so we can eat and celebrate. My son who was dead has now come back to life. He was lost and has now been found!" And the celebration began.

The older son had been out working in the fields. When he returned to the house he heard music and dancing. He asked one of the servants what was going on. The servant told him, "Your brother is back, and because he is safe your father killed the best calf to celebrate."

The older son was so angry that he didn't want to go into the house. His father came out and begged him to come in, but he said, "I have been working for you for all these years and I have always obeyed you, but you never gave me even a baby goat to celebrate with my friends. But now that this son of yours is back, who spent your money living wildly, you killed the best calf for him."

But his father answered, "My son, you have always been with me, and everything I have is yours. But we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and is now alive; he was lost and now has been found."

(Luke 15)



Jesus feeds five thousand people

Jesus was followed everywhere by many people because they had seen Him heal the sick, and they liked to hear what He had to say. So they followed Him to a place far out in the countryside by the Sea of Galilee.

It was already evening. Jesus had been talking for a long time and healing many sick people. The disciples came to Jesus and said, "This place is a long way from anywhere, and it is already late. Let the people go to the villages to buy something to eat."



But Jesus answered, "They don't have to leave. Why don't you give them something to eat?" The disciples said, "We have nothing except five loaves of bread and two fish." Jesus asked for the food and commanded the people to sit down.

Jesus looked up to heaven, took the five loaves of bread and the two fish in His hands, and blessed them. He broke the bread and fish in pieces and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples passed them out to the crowd. They all had as much food as they wanted. Then the disciples gathered up twelve baskets of leftovers. Jesus fed about five thousand men, not counting the women and children.

(Matthew 14)

Jesus walks on the water

Soon after this, Jesus sent His disciples across the sea in a boat while He went up on a mountain to pray alone. He was still there by evening. The boat was in the middle of the sea and was struggling with the waves because it was heading against the wind.

At dawn Jesus came to them, walking on the water. When the disciples saw Him, they were afraid. They thought He was a ghost and started screaming. But Jesus said to them, "Have courage, it is I; don't be afraid!"

Peter said, "Lord, if it's really You, then give me the command to come to You walking on the water." Jesus said, "Come." Then Peter got out of the boat and started walking on the water towards Jesus.



But when Peter saw the strong wind and the huge waves, he became afraid. At that moment he started sinking and shouted, “Lord, save me!” Jesus reached out His hand and caught him and said, “Why do you have so little faith? Why did you start doubting?”

As soon as they got in the boat, the wind died down. The disciples on the boat came and worshipped Him, saying, “You are truly the son of God!”

(Matthew 14)

Jesus heals sick people

Jesus and His disciples crossed the sea and came to the region of Gennesaret. When they got out of the boat, the people recognized Jesus. They immediately ran throughout the countryside, bringing sick people on their beds to wherever Jesus was. Wherever He went, in villages, in towns, or out in the country, they brought sick people and begged Him to let them touch His clothes. Everyone who touched Him was healed.

(Mark 6)



The bread of life

The people remembered how Jesus fed them the bread and fish. They heard that He walked on the water. They followed Jesus everywhere and wanted to see more miracles.

But Jesus said to them, "You ate the bread that you needed because you were hungry. But you don't understand that this miracle is a sign from God. God wants you to have not only the ordinary food, but everlasting food for eternal life."

The people asked, "What should we do about it?"

Jesus answered, "God wants only one thing of you: put your trust in Me and believe that God has sent Me to you!"

Then they said, "Give us a sign to prove that you are sent by God. Work a miracle for us! We remember when the Israelites were in the desert, they ate the manna, the bread from heaven!"

Jesus answered, "God can give you even more. He gives you the bread that gives life."

"Lord, give us this bread!" they begged. And Jesus said, "I am this bread, the bread of life. Whoever comes to Me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in Me will never be thirsty. And whoever comes to Me will not be turned away."

(John 6)



The great feast

Jesus wanted to show who it is that God invites and who accepts the invitation, so He told this story:

A man once prepared a great banquet and invited many guests. When dinnertime came, he sent his servants to say to the guests, "Come in, everything is ready."

The guests started making excuses one after the other. The first one said, "I have bought land and I must go and see it. I cannot come." Another one said, "I bought five pairs of oxen and I must go inspect them. I cannot come." And another one said, "I got married today and so I cannot come."

The servant went back and told all this to his master. The master got angry and said to the servant, "Quickly, go out to the alleys and the streets of the town and bring in everyone who is poor, crippled, blind, and lame." When the servant came back he said, "My lord, what you ordered is done and there are still empty places at the table." Then the master said to the servant, "Go out into the country and bring everybody you can find to come and fill my house. I tell you, not even one of those who were invited will taste my dinner."

(Luke 14)



“You are Jesus”

Jesus asked His disciples once, “What do people say about Me?”

The disciples answered, “Some say that You are John the Baptist. Others say that You are Elijah the prophet who has come back to life. Some others think that You are one of the prophets of old.”

Then Jesus asked His disciples, “Who do you think I am?”

Then Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Messiah, Jesus, the Son of the living God.”

And Jesus told him, “Blessed are you, Simon, because this has not been revealed to you by any person, but by God. And I name you Peter, which means ‘rock,’ and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades will not be able to defeat her.”

(Matthew 16)



God shows who Jesus is

Jesus went up on a high mountain together with Peter and the two brothers James and John.

There in front of them He was transformed. His face was shining like the sun and His clothes became as white as the light. Then there appeared two men who were talking with Jesus. They were Moses and Elijah.

Then Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good that we are here! If You wish, I will put up three shelters: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

As he spoke, a bright cloud covered them and from the cloud a voice was heard saying, “This is My beloved Son, the One I have chosen. Listen to what He says.”

When the disciples heard this, they were very frightened and they fell facedown on the ground. Jesus came to them, touched them gently, and said, “Get up and do not be afraid.” They lifted their eyes and saw that Jesus was alone again.

As they were going down the mountain, Jesus told them, “Don’t tell anyone what you have seen, until I rise from the dead.”

(Matthew 17)

Two of the disciples want the best places

One day, James and John asked Jesus, “Teacher, we want something from You.”

“What do you want Me to do for you?” Jesus asked. And they said, “When You come in all Your glory, let one of us sit on Your right and one on Your left.”

When the other disciples heard this, they were angry with James and John. Then Jesus called the twelve disciples together and said to them, “You know that in this world the kings are cruel to their people and treat them badly. This must not happen with you. If you want to be great among the others, you must be the servant of all the others. And anyone who wants to have the best place must be the slave of all the others. I have not come to be served by others. I am here to serve people and give My life for them.

(Mark 10)

The Good Shepherd

Jesus told this story once to His disciples to help them understand why God had sent Him. “The people of God are like a flock of sheep. They feel safe when they have a shepherd whom they know and trust. When somebody climbs the fence and does not come in through the door, he is a thief. The shepherd comes through the door. The guard opens the door for him and the sheep recognize his voice. The shepherd knows all of his sheep and calls each one by name, and they come to him for guidance. But they will never follow a stranger.”

The disciples did not understand what He was talking about. So Jesus said again, "I am the good shepherd. I know the sheep that are Mine, and My sheep know Me. I will never abandon them. I am ready to die for them. My sheep obey Me. I know each one of them and they follow Me."

The Jews who were listening to Jesus did not understand what He was trying to tell them. Some of them said, "He is crazy! Why are you listening to Him?" But others said, "These words are not the words of a crazy man. How can a crazy man perform miracles?"

(John 10)

Jesus heals ten sick people

Jesus was walking towards a village when He was met by ten men. They had leprosy, a terrible skin disease, and because of this they were not allowed to live in the village. The men stood at a distance and shouted loudly, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us and heal us!"

Jesus saw them and said, "Go to the priests and show them that you are healthy." He said this because only the priests could allow them to live in the village again.



While they were on their way to see the priests, the ten men were healed. When one of them, a Samaritan, saw that he had been healed he went back to Jesus, praising God. He knelt at the feet of Jesus and thanked Him.

Then Jesus said, "Weren't all ten of you healed? Where are the other nine? Did no one come back to praise God except this foreigner?"

Then He said to the Samaritan, "You may get up and go. Your faith has saved you."

(Luke 17)

Jesus heals the blind beggar

Jesus and His disciples were walking near the town of Jericho, and many people were with them. At the side of the road sat a beggar, a blind man named Bartimaeus.

When the blind man heard that Jesus was coming that way, he started shouting loudly, "Jesus, help me!" Many people urged him to be quiet but he kept shouting even more loudly, "Jesus, help me!"

Jesus heard him and said, "Have him come over." They called to the blind man and said, "Don't be afraid! Come on! He is calling for you!" Bartimaeus threw off his coat, jumped up, and came to Jesus.

Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" "Lord, I want my sight back," said the blind man. And Jesus said, "You may go. Your faith has saved you." The man could see immediately and he followed Jesus on His way.

(Mark 10)



Jesus comes to Zacchaeus

Zacchaeus was a tax collector living in Jericho. He had become rich by collecting more money than he was supposed to and keeping the extra for himself. Everybody knew this, but they could do nothing about it.

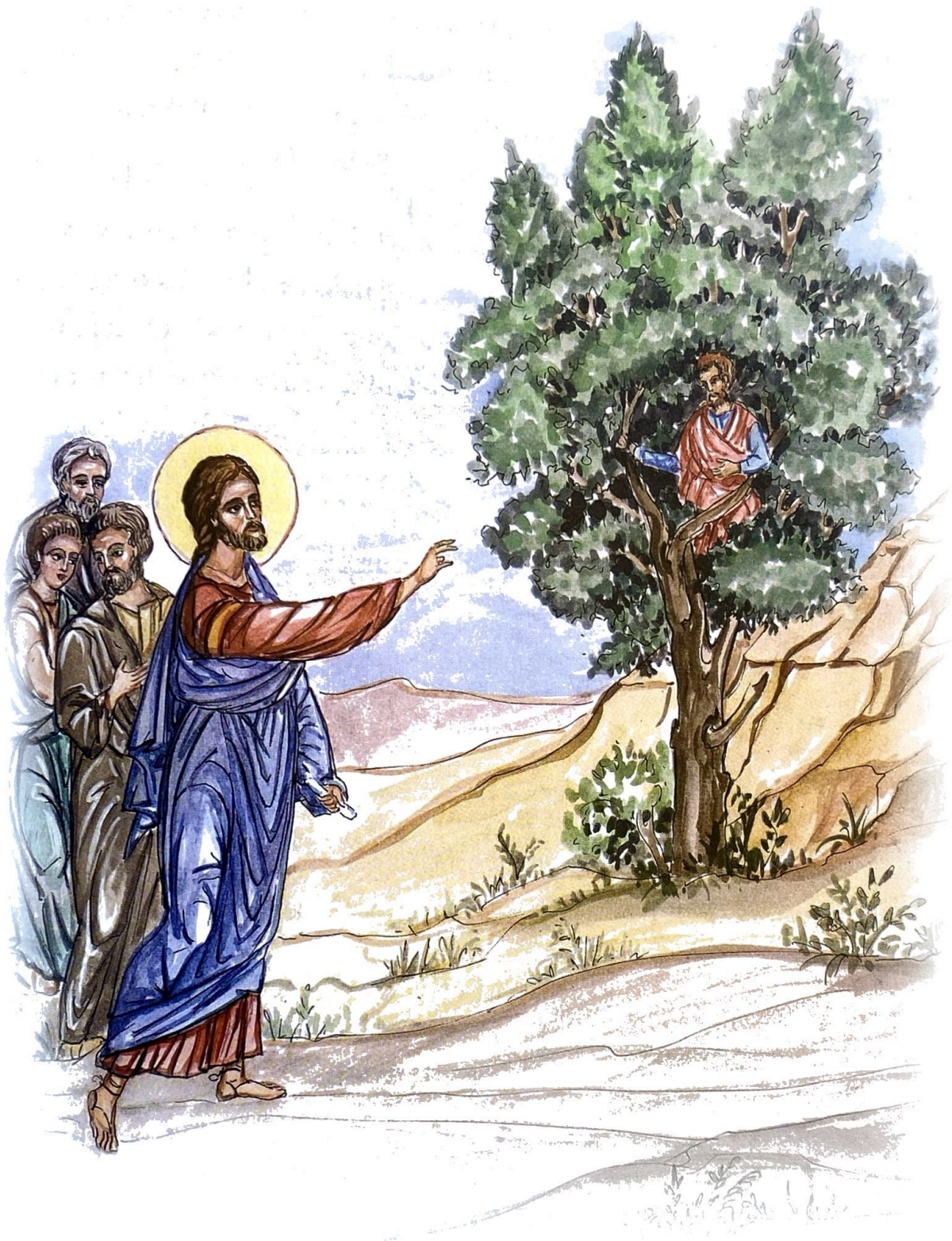
One day Zacchaeus heard that Jesus was in town, and he decided he wanted to see Him. But he could not see anything because he was very short and the place was very crowded. Zacchaeus was not discouraged. He had an idea. He quickly climbed up into a sycamore tree. He would easily be able to see Jesus from up in the tree. When Jesus came by, He noticed Zacchaeus in the tree and said, "Zacchaeus, come down quickly. I must stay in your house today."

Zacchaeus came down immediately. He led Jesus to his house and welcomed Him with great joy. All the people in Jericho who saw this started grumbling and said, "Zacchaeus is a sinner. Jesus should not stay at his house!"

But Zacchaeus said to Jesus, "I have been greedy. I collected more money than I should have. I want to make it right, so I will give half of my property to the poor. And to anyone who has paid more than he was supposed to, I will give back four times as much!"

Then Jesus said, "This is a happy day for you and your family. God rejoices that you have changed your way of thinking and living. I came to find sinners and save them."

(Luke 19)



Mary and Martha

During His travels Jesus came to the village of Bethany. A woman named Martha, along with her sister Mary, invited Him to her house. While Jesus was there, Mary sat by His feet and listened to His teaching. Martha, on the other hand, went to the kitchen. She had a lot of work to do because she wanted to honor Jesus with a large fancy meal.

Martha expected that Mary would come and help her, but she stayed near Jesus instead. Then Martha complained to Jesus, “Lord, don’t You care that my sister has left me alone to prepare and serve the meal? Tell her to help me.”

But Jesus answered, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about so many things. Only one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen what is best; she heard My words and kept them in her heart. And nobody can take this from her.”

(Luke 10)



Lazarus

Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and their brother, Lazarus. When Lazarus became very ill, his sisters sent a message to Jesus saying, "Lord, Your good friend is sick."

When Jesus heard this message He said, "This sickness will not bring death. The glory of God will be seen instead."

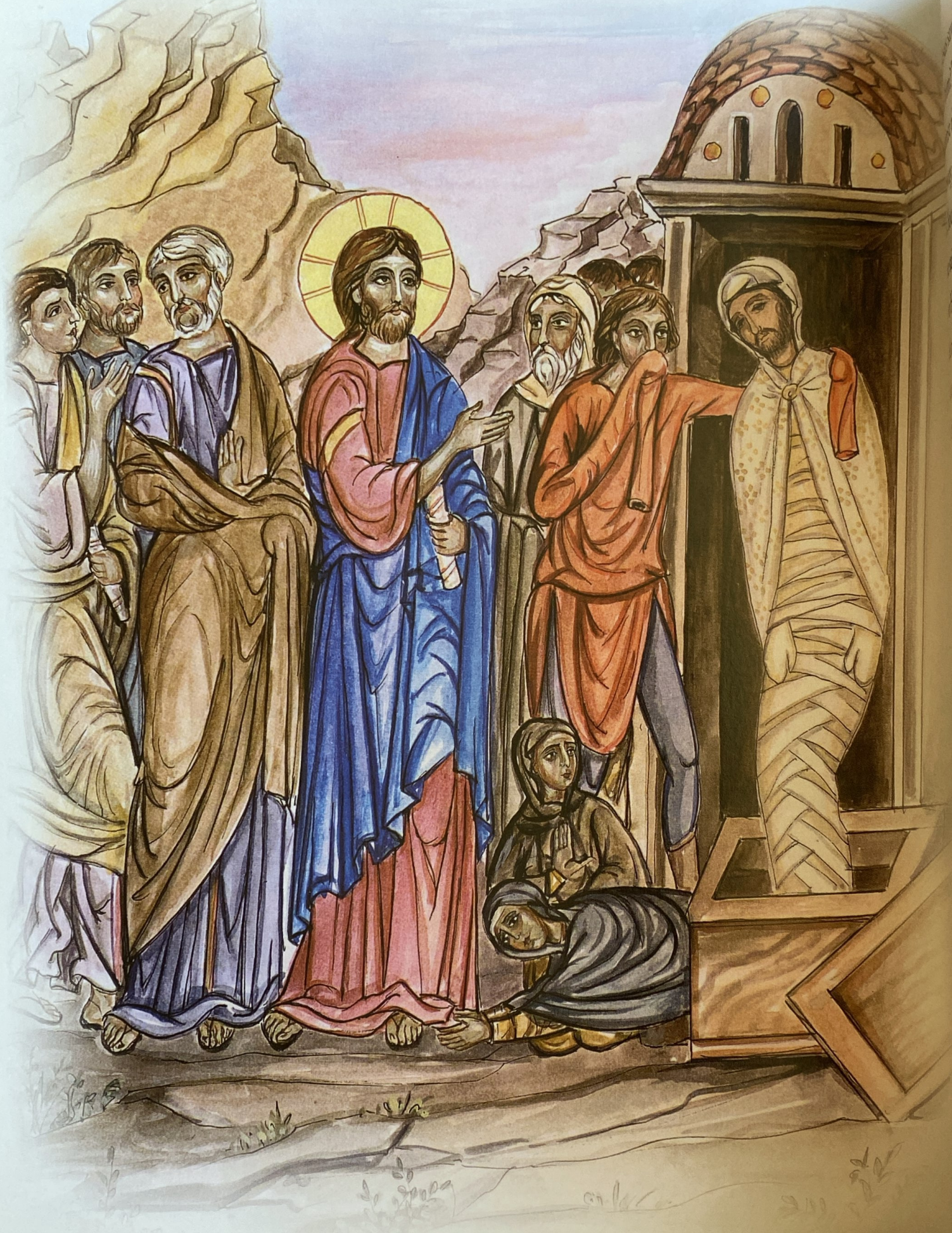
Two days later, Jesus decided to return to Bethany where Martha, Mary, and Lazarus lived. Lazarus had not gotten better; in fact, he died and had been in his grave for four days by the time Jesus reached the village.

Many friends had come to comfort Martha and Mary. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet Him while Mary stayed at home. Then Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give You anything You ask." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will live again." Martha replied, "I know that he will be raised, when all the dead are raised."

Then Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Everyone who has faith in Me will live and will never die. Do you believe this?"

"Yes, Lord. I believe that You are the Savior whom God has promised. You are the Son of God," Martha answered.

Martha went back home and told Mary that Jesus had come. Mary got up and went to meet Him, and her friends went with her. When Mary saw Jesus, she knelt at His feet saying, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died."



When Jesus saw her crying, He became very sad and said, "Where have you put him?" They took Him to the place: it was a cave and a huge stone was against the entrance. Then Jesus started crying, too, and He said, "Roll away the stone." He lifted His eyes to heaven and prayed, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. I know that You always hear Me. But I have said this so that everybody here will believe that You have sent Me." Then He said with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" And out came the dead man. His feet and his hands were wrapped tightly with strips of cloth and a cloth covered his face, as he was when they laid him in the cave. "Untie him and let him go," Jesus said.

Many people saw what Jesus did and because of this they believed in Him.
(John 11)

Mary anoints Jesus

A few days before Passover, Jesus came again to Bethany. Martha, Mary, and Lazarus invited Jesus and the disciples to their house for dinner. Martha was serving the guests, and Lazarus was with them, too.

Then Mary took a small bottle of very expensive perfume and put it all over Jesus' feet. Then she wiped His feet with her long hair, and the smell of the perfume filled the house.

One of the twelve disciples, Judas Iscariot, said, "Why wasn't this perfume sold for three hundred silver coins and the money given to the poor?"

Then Jesus said, "Leave her alone. What she did is for the day of My burial. You will always have the poor with you, but You will not always have Me with you."
(John 12)

The entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem

Jesus and His disciples were walking towards Jerusalem. When they were near the city, He said to two of His disciples, "Go to the little village over there. You will find a young donkey that has not yet been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anybody asks why you are doing this, tell them, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back soon'."

The two disciples went to the village and found the donkey as Jesus had said. Some of those standing there asked them, "What are you doing untying the donkey?" The disciples replied, "The Lord needs it," and they let them take it.

They brought the young donkey to Jesus and put some of their clothes on it so He could sit comfortably. Many of the people who were there spread their clothes on the street and cut palm branches from the trees and spread them on the street as well. Jesus rode on the donkey as it walked on the clothes and branches, which was a sign





of great honor. Those who went before Him and those who followed Him shouted, "Praise the Lord! Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord!" This is how Jesus entered Jerusalem.

(Mark 11)

Jesus drives the merchants out of the temple

The next day Jesus went to the temple. There were many merchants who had set up their tables inside, selling animals and other items for the sacrifices that people made while worshipping. There were also people who traded different kinds of money and made change for purchases. Jesus became very angry when He saw that the temple had become like a market, and so He chased the merchants out of the temple and overturned the tables of the moneychangers. Then He taught them, saying, "Your place is not here. God said, 'My temple must be a house of prayer for all people.' But you have made it a den of robbers."

The chief priests and the scribes, the ones who explained God's commandments to the people, did not agree at all with what Jesus did. That is why they wanted to kill him. But they were afraid of the people. For many people admired Jesus and listened to His words with amazement.

(Mark 11)



Jesus speaks about the end of the age

As He was coming out of the temple, one of the disciples said to Jesus, "Teacher, look at these huge stones and the great buildings!" Jesus said, "Do you admire all of this? Know that everything will be torn down so that not even one stone will be left on top of another."



Then He went with some of His disciples out of Jerusalem, to a place called the Mount of Olives. The disciples asked, “When are all these things going to happen? What will be the sign that these things will take place?”

And Jesus answered, “No one knows the day or the time that the end comes. Only the Father in heaven knows it. This is why you must pray and be alert. It will be like the man who traveled to another country and left

his servants to take care of his home. He gave orders to everyone and told the gatekeeper, 'Be alert and watchful for the time when I come back!'"

"It is the same with you. You don't know when the time will come. That is why I am telling you to be alert!"

(Mark 13)

The betrayal by Judas

Around that time Judas Iscariot, one of the disciples, went to the chief priests. He told them, "What will you give me if I help you arrest Jesus?"

They were glad to hear that someone close to Jesus would betray Him, and promised to give Judas thirty silver coins. From that time on, Judas was ready for any chance to betray Jesus.

(Mark 14)



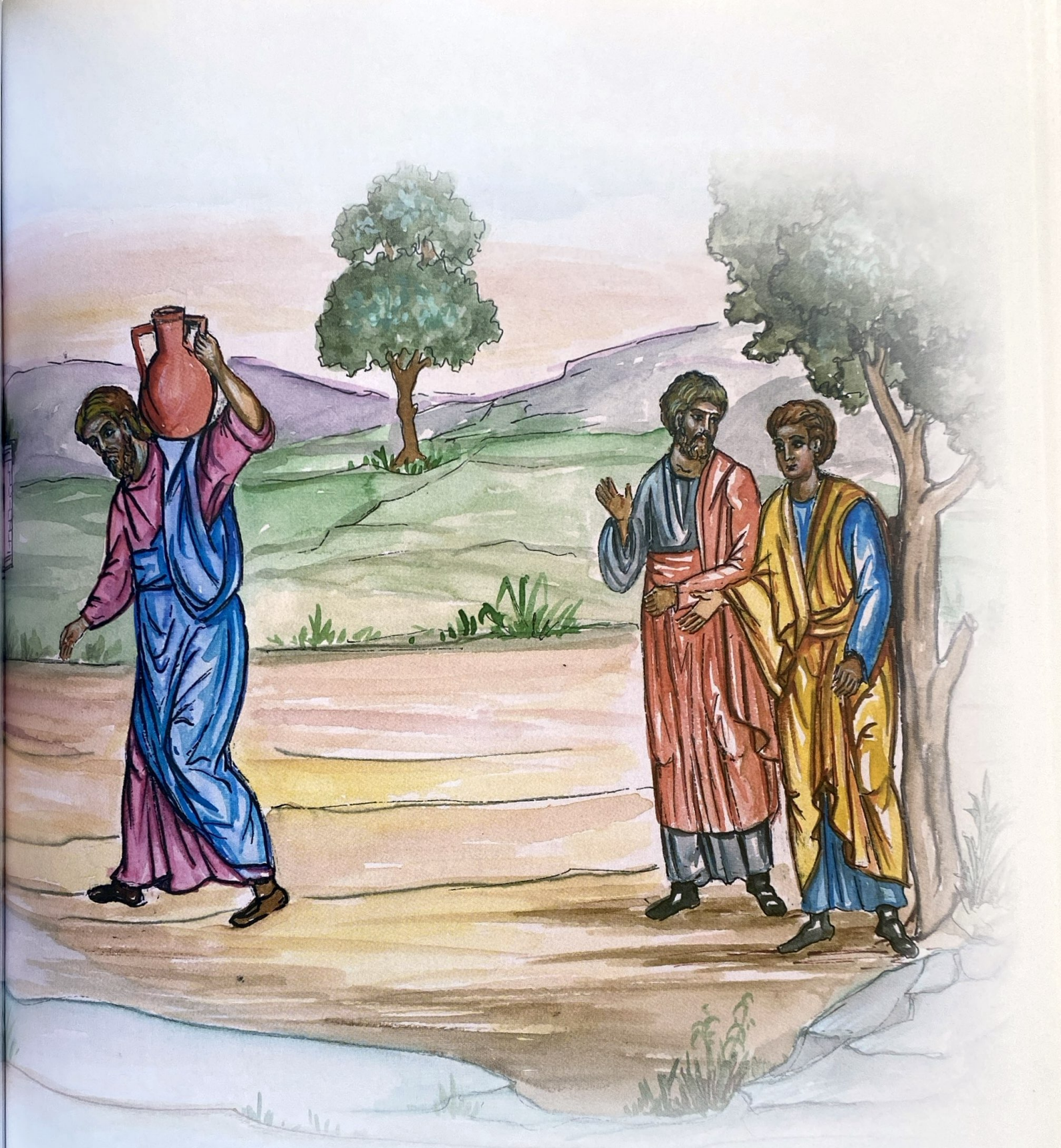
Jesus celebrates Passover with His Disciples

The time of Passover came, when the people remembered how God brought the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. It was a time when many Jews went to Jerusalem. The feast of Passover started in the evening with a solemn supper, and so the disciples asked Jesus, “Where do you want to celebrate the Passover meal?”

Jesus told two of His disciples, “Go into town. You will meet a man carrying a jar of water. Follow him, and when he goes into a house, the housekeeper there will show you a big room on the upper floor. This is where you will prepare the Passover dinner.” The disciples went into town and found everything as Jesus had promised, so they began to prepare the Passover meal.

(Mark 14)





Jesus washes the disciples' feet

That night Jesus was with His disciples. He knew that the time had come for Him to leave this world and go to His Father in heaven. So He got up from the table where they were having supper and removed His outer garment, and wrapped a towel around His waist. Then He put some water in a large bowl and started washing His disciples' feet and wiping them with the towel.

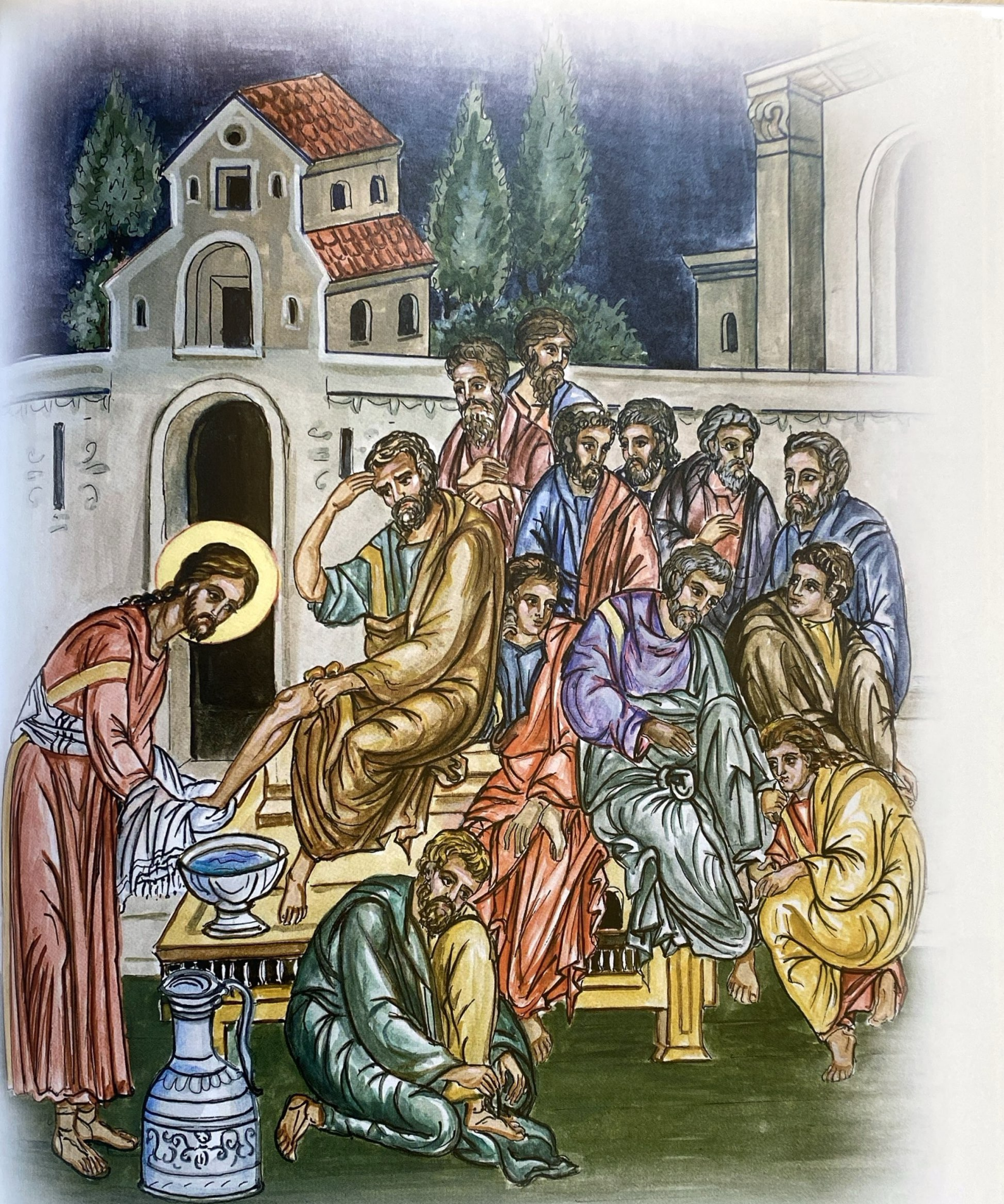
When Jesus came to Peter, Peter said to Him, "Lord, are You going to wash my feet? I will never let You wash my feet!" Jesus answered, "If I don't wash your feet, then you can have nothing to do with Me."

Then Peter said, "If this is true, Lord, wash not only my feet, but my hands and my head also." But Jesus said, "The man who has been washed and bathed is clean all over, and he has no need to wash anything except his feet. You are clean, but not every part of you."



When Jesus finished washing their feet, He put on His garment again and returned to His place at the table. Then He said, "Did you understand what I have done to you? You call Me 'Teacher' and 'Lord' and you are right, because I am. If I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you must do the same for one another."

(John 13)



The mystical supper

Jesus and the disciples were at the table eating when Jesus said, "One of you here eating with Me will betray Me." The disciples were very upset by this and they started asking one after the other, "Is it I? Is it I?" And Jesus said, "It is one of the twelve, one who dips his bread into the same bowl with Me."

As they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread and blessed it and broke it into pieces and gave it to the disciples saying, "Take and eat, this is My Body."

Then He took a cup of wine, gave thanks to God, and gave it to each of them to drink a sip. "This is My Blood," he said, "that seals the new covenant, and it is poured out for everyone." After this, they sang the Passover hymns and went to the Mount of Olives.

(Mark 14)





Peter's promise to Jesus

As they were walking, Jesus said to them, "All of you will lose your faith in Me tonight. But after My Resurrection I will be waiting for you in Galilee." Then Peter said to Him, "Even if everybody loses faith in You, I will never lose it."

Jesus replied, "I tell you that tonight before the rooster crows twice, you will deny that you know Me three times."

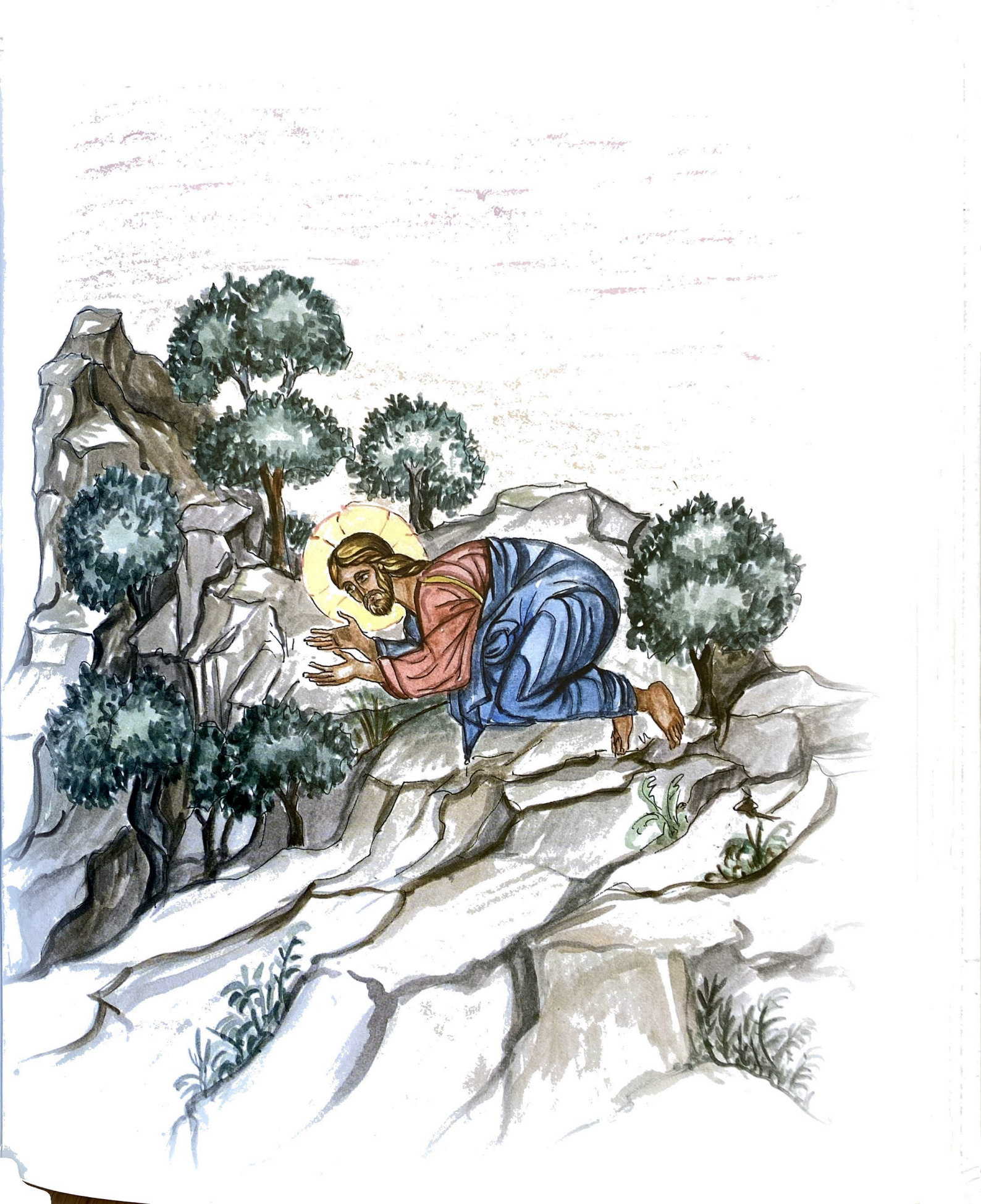
But Peter insisted this would not happen and promised Him, "I will never deny You, even if I have to die with You."

(Mark 14)

Jesus prays in the garden of Gethsemane

They came to a garden called Gethsemane and Jesus said to His disciples, "Stay here while I pray."

He went a little way beyond them and knelt down on the ground and prayed, "Father, save Me from death! But let Your will, not Mine, be done." After awhile, Jesus came back to His disciples and found them sleeping. He said to Peter, "Are you sleeping? Weren't you able to stay awake for even an hour? Stay awake and pray so that you will not fail when you are tempted."





Jesus again went away from them to pray. When He came back, He again found the disciples sleeping. This happened for a third time and finally He said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? That’s enough. The time has come. Get up. We must be going. The one who is going to betray Me is already here.”

And as Jesus spoke, Judas Iscariot arrived and with him was a crowd of people with swords and clubs. Judas had told them ahead of time that he would identify Jesus by giving Him a kiss and that this would be the signal for them to arrest Him.

Judas came immediately to Jesus and kissed Him saying, "Teacher!" Right away the crowd grabbed Jesus and tied His hands together. One of the disciples drew his sword and cut off the ear of one of the servants. Jesus told them, "Am I a violent robber, that you need to come with swords and clubs to arrest Me? I was with you every day in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest Me then." And Jesus healed the servant's ear.

Then all the disciples left Him and ran away in fear.

(Mark 14)



Jesus is questioned

In the house of the chief priest, the priests, elders, and scribes questioned Jesus all night about His teachings. Many of them made up lies about Him. They brought forward false witnesses who claimed, “We heard Him say, ‘I will tear down this temple that is made by people, and I will build another one that will not be made by people’s hands’.”

Then the chief priest stood in the middle of the council and asked Jesus directly, “Don’t You have anything to say? What about all these things You are accused of?” But Jesus remained silent. The chief priest asked again. “Are you the Messiah we are expecting? Are you the Son of God?” This time Jesus spoke. “I am,” He said.



The chief priest became so angry that he tore his own clothes and said, "We don't need any more witnesses. You heard His blasphemy. He says that He is the Son of God. What is your decision?"

Everybody decided that He was guilty and must be put to death.

(Mark 14)

Jesus is brought to Pilate

Early in the morning the crowd brought Jesus to face the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. He asked Him directly, "Are You the king of the Jews?" "You have said it," Jesus answered. Then the priests started blaming Him loudly for many things. Pilate said to Him, "Why don't you answer? Look at how many things they blame you for." But Jesus said nothing more, and Pilate was amazed.

Now it was the custom that every year during the feast of the Passover, Pilate would release a prisoner according to the will of the people. In those days a man named Barabbas was in prison because he was a murderer.

The crowd started shouting to Pilate, asking him to release a prisoner. Pilate asked them, "Do you want me to release the king of the Jews?" But the chief priests urged the crowds to ask for Barabbas instead.

Pilate asked them, "What do you want me to do with the one you call king of the Jews?" And they shouted, "Crucify Him!" "But why, what has He done wrong?" Pilate asked. But they shouted even more loudly, "Crucify Him!" Crucifying was a shameful, cruel, and very painful way of putting Him to death.

When Pilate realized that he could not achieve anything in this way, he took some water and washed his hands in front of the crowd saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood. He has done nothing wrong. The blame is on you." He released Barabbas in order to satisfy the crowd and then he ordered his soldiers to beat Jesus and crucify Him.





The Roman soldiers took Jesus and dressed Him in a dark red robe, to imitate something a king would wear. They made a circle out of thorns and put it on His head like a crown, and they put a cane in His right hand as a scepter. And they mocked Him saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!"

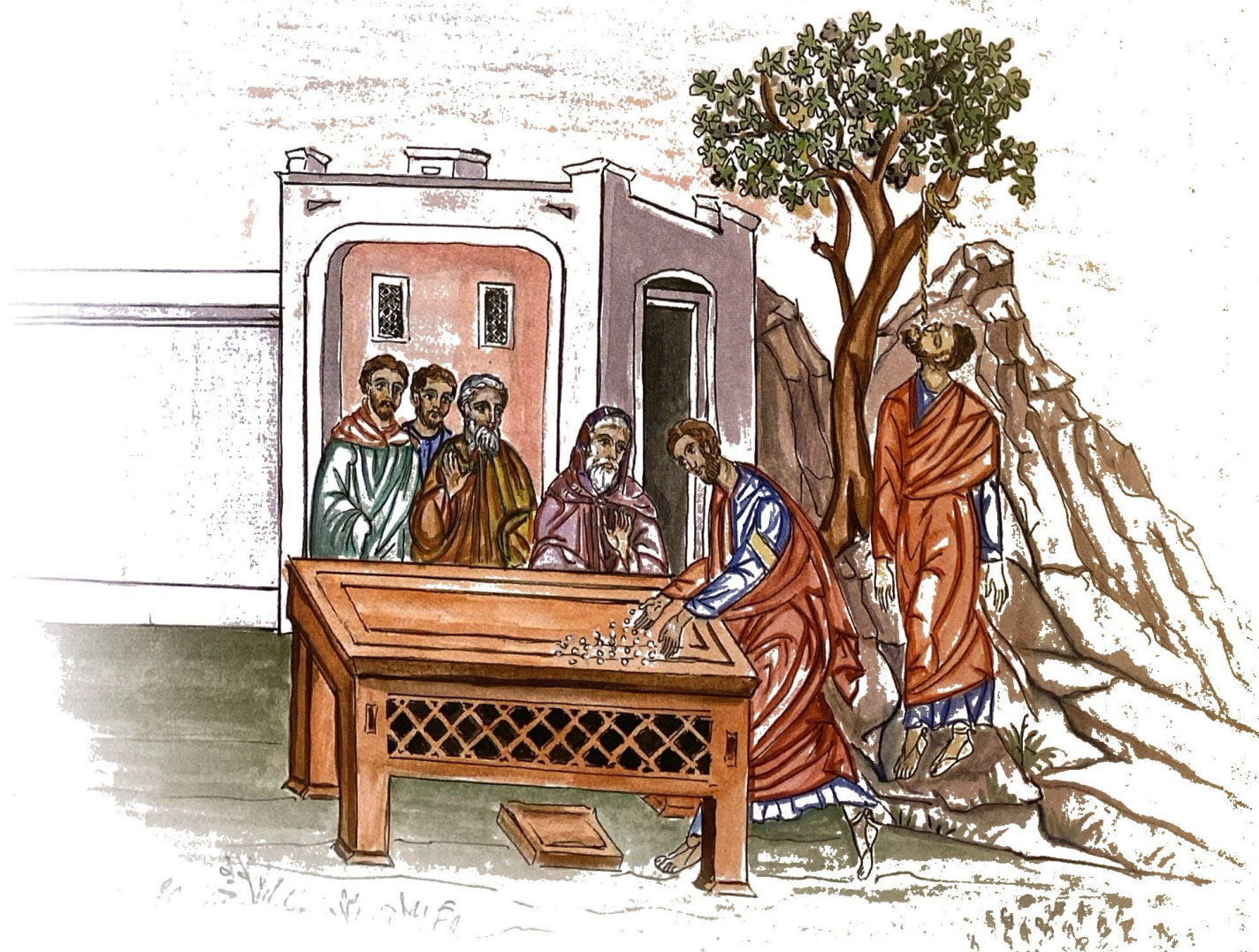
(Mark 15; Matthew 27)

Judas regrets his betrayal

When Judas heard that Jesus had been sentenced to death, he had regrets about betraying Him. He went to the chief priests and the elders and told them he wanted to return the money and said, "I have sinned, because I have handed over an innocent man to die."

But they said to him, "What does that matter to us? That's your problem." Then Judas threw the silver coins in the temple, and he left and hanged himself.

(Matthew 27)



Jesus dies on the cross

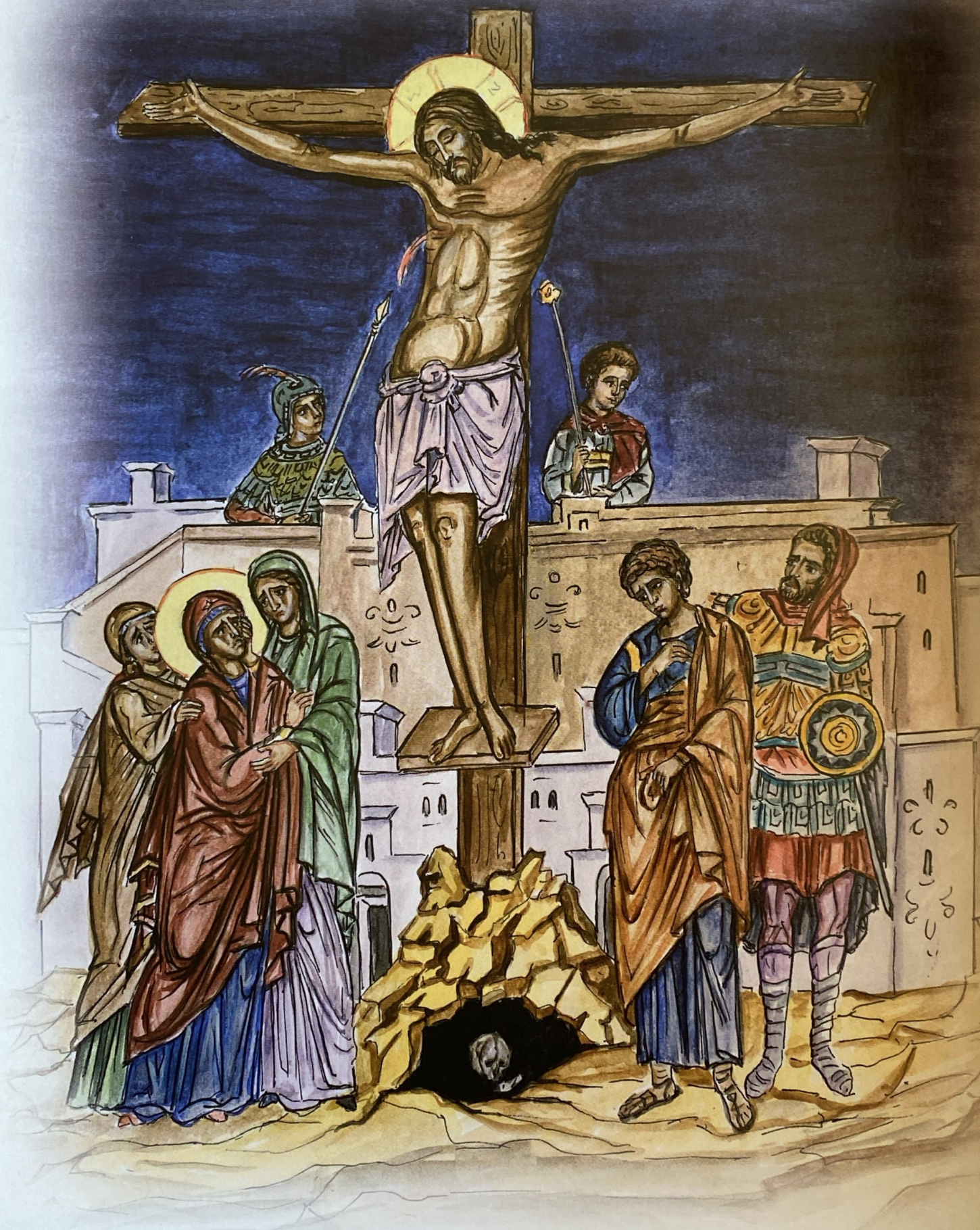
The soldiers took Jesus to crucify Him. They led Him out of the town to a place called Golgotha, which means "Place of the Skull."

It was about nine o'clock in the morning when they nailed His hands and feet to a large wooden cross. The soldiers divided His clothes and threw dice to see who would get to keep them. The reason for the crucifixion was written at the top of the cross, "The King of the Jews." Along with Jesus they also crucified two robbers, one on His right and one on His left.

Crowds of people came to see this torment. Those who passed by laughed at Him saying, "Hey, You were going to destroy the temple and build it again in three days! Save Yourself now and get Yourself down from the cross!"

The chief priests and the scribes also mocked Him, saying to each other, "He saved others, but He cannot save Himself. He says that He is the Messiah, the king of Israel. Let Him come down from the cross now, so that we can see and believe." Even those who were crucified there with Him were mocking Him.

At noon all the earth was covered by darkness for three hours. At about three o'clock in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani," which means, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?"



Some of those who were there heard Him and said, "Listen, He is calling for the prophet Elijah." Then somebody ran and soaked a sponge with sour vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink saying, "Let's see now if Elijah comes to take Him down from the cross." With a loud cry, Jesus breathed His last. When the Roman centurion who was there watching, saw this he said, "Indeed, this man was the Son of God."

Some women were there too, watching from a distance. Among them was Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and Salome. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem.

(Mark 15)

The burial of Jesus

It was dusk. The next day was the Sabbath, a holy day when no one worked, so the crucified men had to be buried before sunset. Pilate was told of this, and by his orders the soldiers broke the legs of the two men who were crucified with Jesus to make them die more quickly. When they came to Jesus, they saw He was already dead and so they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers stabbed Jesus in the side with a spear, and blood and water came out of the wound.

After this, Joseph of Arimathea went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Joseph was one of Jesus' disciples, but he was also a member of the Council, so Pilate gave him permission.

Joseph brought a special burial cloth and took Jesus down from the cross and wrapped Him in it. He laid Jesus in a tomb carved into the side of a hill. A man named Nicodemus, another disciple of Jesus, helped Joseph. Then they rolled a huge stone across the tomb's entrance. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joses watched where they buried Jesus.

(Mark 15; John 19)





The Resurrection of Jesus

The day after the Sabbath, very early in the morning, the women returned to the tomb. They brought precious perfumes to anoint Jesus' body, as was the custom of the Jewish people, but they were worried about how they were going to move the huge stone blocking the entrance to the tomb. But when they arrived, they found that the stone had been rolled away. The entrance of the grave was open and when they went in, they discovered that Jesus' body was not there.

At that moment, two men in shining clothes appeared in front of them. The women were very frightened, and as they bowed low to the ground, the men asked, "Why are you looking for the living among the dead? He is not here. He is risen from the dead!"



The women ran to the disciples immediately and told them everything that had happened. But the disciples did not believe them. “What is this nonsense you are talking about!” they said.

Peter decided to see with his own eyes if the women’s story was true. So he got up and ran to the tomb, and John ran with him.

When Peter went inside the tomb, he saw only the strips of linen cloth in which they had wrapped Jesus. Then he went back home wondering what had happened.

(Luke 24)

On the road to Emmaus

On that same day, as two of the disciples walked from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus, they were talking about what had happened. As they were talking, Jesus Himself came near to them and walked with them. But although they could see Him with their eyes, they did not recognize Him.

“What are you talking about so seriously and why you look so sad?” Jesus asked them. One of the disciples, Cleopas, said, “Haven’t you heard what happened in Jerusalem these last days?” Jesus asked, “What happened?”

They told Him, “Jesus of Nazareth was a prophet mighty in deeds and words before God. But our leaders gave Him up to be crucified. We had hoped that He would be the savior promised to everyone by God. It has been three days since all this happened. But today, some women in our group astounded us. They went early in the morning to the tomb, but they didn’t find His body. They came back saying that they had seen angels who told them that He is alive. Some of our group also went to the tomb and found it as the women had said, but they didn’t see Jesus.”

Then Jesus said, “You are foolish and without understanding. Your heart is slow to believe all that the prophets said. Shouldn’t the Messiah suffer all this in order to be glorified?” and He started explaining all that was written in the Scriptures about Himself.

When they reached Emmaus they begged him to stay with them, because it was already evening and almost dark. So Jesus went to stay with them in the village.



When they sat down for supper, Jesus took the bread, blessed, broke, and gave it to them to eat. At that moment their eyes were opened and they realized who He was. But Jesus disappeared.

Then they said to each other, "Didn't we feel our hearts burning in us, as He was talking to us on the road, explaining the Scriptures?" They got up immediately and returned to Jerusalem and told the other disciples what had happened.

(Luke 24)

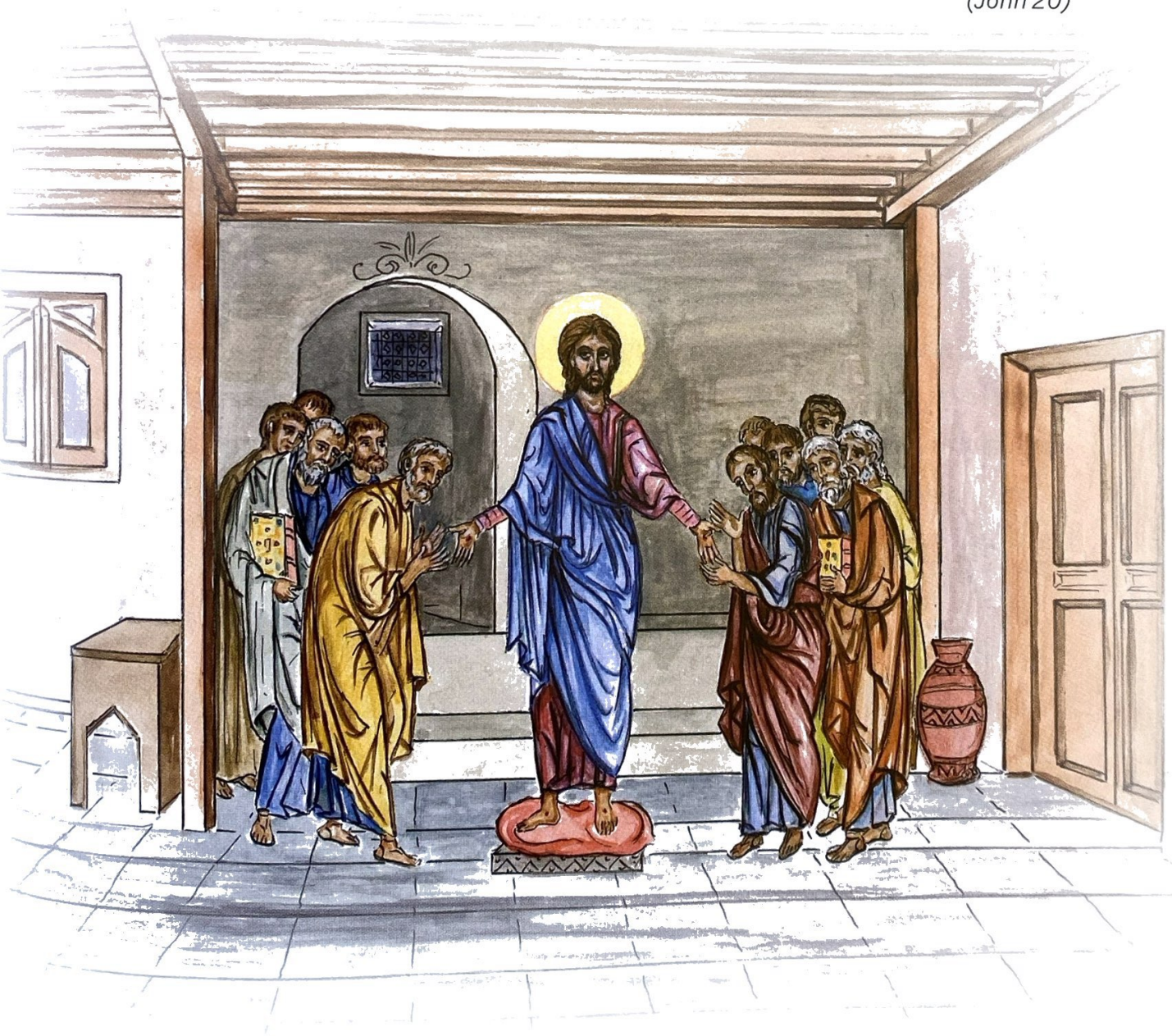
Jesus appears to the disciples

It was already evening on that same day, the first day after the Sabbath. The disciples were gathered in an upstairs room with the doors shut, because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities.

Then Jesus appeared and stood among them saying, "Peace to you! As the Father sent Me, I am sending you." And as He said this He showed them the marks in His hands and His side.

The disciples were very happy that they had seen Jesus.

(John 20)





Jesus and Thomas

Thomas was one of the twelve disciples, but he was not with the others when Jesus came. So when they told him, "We saw the Lord with our own eyes," he answered, "Unless I see the marks of the nails in His hands, and unless I touch them, and unless I touch the mark of the spear on His side, I will not believe."

Eight days later the disciples were gathered again in the house and Thomas was with them. Jesus came to them again even though the doors were closed, and stood among them and said, "Peace to you."

Then He said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see My hands. Touch My side. Stop doubting and have faith."

Thomas said, "You are my Lord and my God!" Then Jesus said, "You believed because you have seen Me with your own eyes. Blessed are those who believe without seeing."

(John 20)

Jesus appears again at the Sea of Galilee

Peter went with some of the disciples to the Sea of Galilee. One night he said, "I am going fishing." The others said, "We are coming with you, too." They spent a whole night fishing, but they didn't catch anything. When morning came, Jesus stood on the shore. But the disciples did not realize it was Jesus.

Then Jesus said to them, "Do you have anything to eat?" "No," they answered. Then He said, "Cast the net on the right side and you will find fish." They did as He said, and there were so many fish in the net that they could not pull it in.

Then they realized that He was Jesus. Peter jumped at once into the water and swam to Him. The other disciples came with the boat, towing the net full of fish, because they were about a hundred yards from shore.

When the disciples came near Jesus, they saw a charcoal fire with a fish on it and bread. "Bring some of the fish you have just caught," Jesus said.

Then Peter went to the boat and helped drag to shore the net full of big fish. But even though there were so many fish, the net was not torn.

Then Jesus said to them, "Come and eat." He took the bread and gave it to them. He did the same with the fish.

(John 21)



Jesus and Peter

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Peter, "Peter, do you love Me more than the others here?" "Yes, Lord," Peter said, "You know that I love You." Then Jesus said, "Feed My lambs."

Then He asked him a second time, "Peter, do you love Me?" "Yes, Lord, You know that I love You," answered Peter. "Take care of My sheep," Jesus said.

Jesus asked for the third time, "Peter, do you love Me?" Peter felt hurt that Jesus had asked him a third time and he answered, "Lord, You know everything. You know that I love You."

Then Jesus said, "Feed My sheep." And He added, "When you are old, you will be tied up and taken where you do not wish to go. In this way you will prove your love for Me. So, follow Me."

(John 21)



Jesus ascends into Heaven

After His Resurrection Jesus appeared several times to the disciples. On the fortieth day they asked Him, "Lord, is this the time for You to bring freedom and power to the people of Israel?"

Jesus answered, "Only the Father knows this. But you will receive power from the Holy Spirit, and you will preach the gospel, the good news about Me, everywhere throughout the world."

He said these things to them on Mount Olivet, near Jerusalem. He raised His hands and blessed them. As He was blessing them, He started rising up to heaven. They watched Him ascending until a cloud hid Him from their eyes.

Two angels appeared suddenly before them and said to them, "Why are you standing and looking at the sky? This same Jesus who was lifted from you to the sky will come again in the same way you just saw." The disciples went back to Jerusalem rejoicing and waiting for the Holy Spirit that Jesus had promised to them. They stayed together praying all the time. Some of the women were with them, including Mary the mother of Jesus.

(Luke 24; Acts 1)

Pentecost

Ten days later was the feast of the Pentecost. People from all over the world came to Jerusalem to pray and celebrate. Jesus' disciples, both men and women, gathered together with one heart to pray. Suddenly there came a noise from heaven; it sounded like a strong wind blowing and it filled the house they were in. Then they saw tongues of fire which settled above each one of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and started speaking in other languages, according to the ability that the Holy Spirit gave them.



When they heard the noise, large crowds gathered together from all over the city. Everybody was amazed because each heard the apostles speaking in his own language. They wondered and said to one other, "What does this mean?" Others laughed and said, "They are drunk."

Then Peter stood and said in a loud voice, "The promise of God is being fulfilled today! Jesus is alive; He is risen from the dead. He has sent the Holy Spirit to us. This Spirit makes us speak, so that all of you can understand us. Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven and you may receive the Holy Spirit."

Because of this, some of the people wanted to hear more about Jesus. They were baptized and started living together like a big family. They were all devoted to the teaching of the apostles, to one another, to prayer, and to Holy Communion.

(Acts 2)

Stephen and Saul

After this, many more people came to believe in Jesus and were baptized. Stephen was one of them. When he talked to people about God and Jesus, they listened attentively. Stephen was full of faith and power, and worked many great and amazing miracles among the people.

Some members of the Jewish Council were very angry with Stephen because he was speaking to the people about Jesus. In fact, they had some people lie by saying that Stephen was cursing God and Moses.

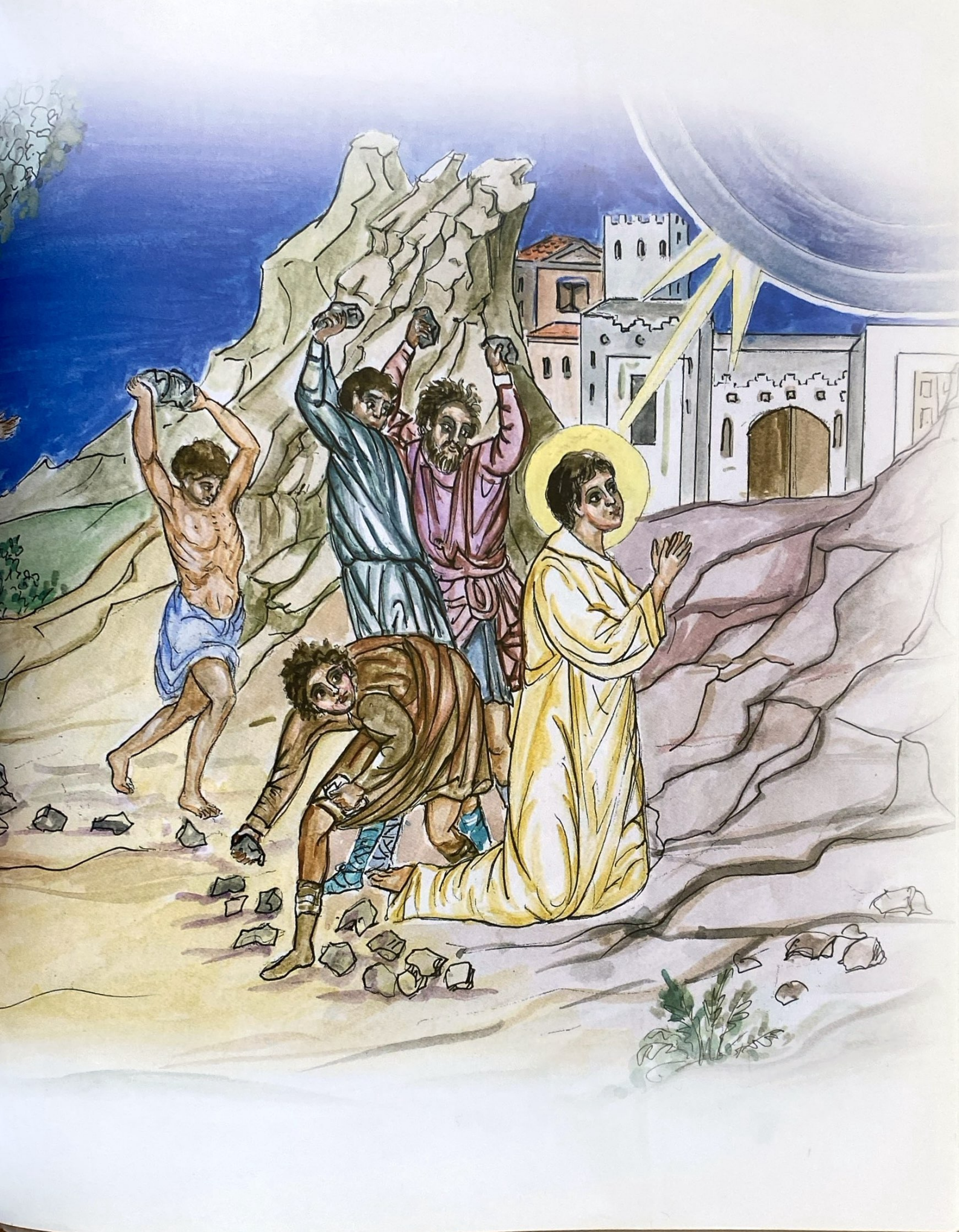
So they had Stephen arrested and dragged him before the Council. There false witnesses stood up and said, "This man is talking about Jesus and is distorting the commandments given by Moses. He is cursing God in this way."

Then the chief priest asked Stephen, "Are these things as they say?" Stephen answered, "God sent His prophets to our ancestors, but the people didn't listen to them. God gave them commandments, but they didn't keep them. Now He sent Jesus, His Son. But you didn't accept Him and you killed Him."

Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, turned to heaven and said, "I see the heavens opened and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." Then the priests became so angry that they shouted at him and covered their ears so they couldn't hear his words. They attacked Stephen, dragging him out of town and throwing rocks at him. Stephen fell to his knees and called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Don't hold this crime against these people." And with these words he died.

From that day began a dangerous period of time for those who believed in Jesus. They were afraid that what happened to Stephen could happen to them, too. A time of great persecution began, which is why many of the believers left Jerusalem.

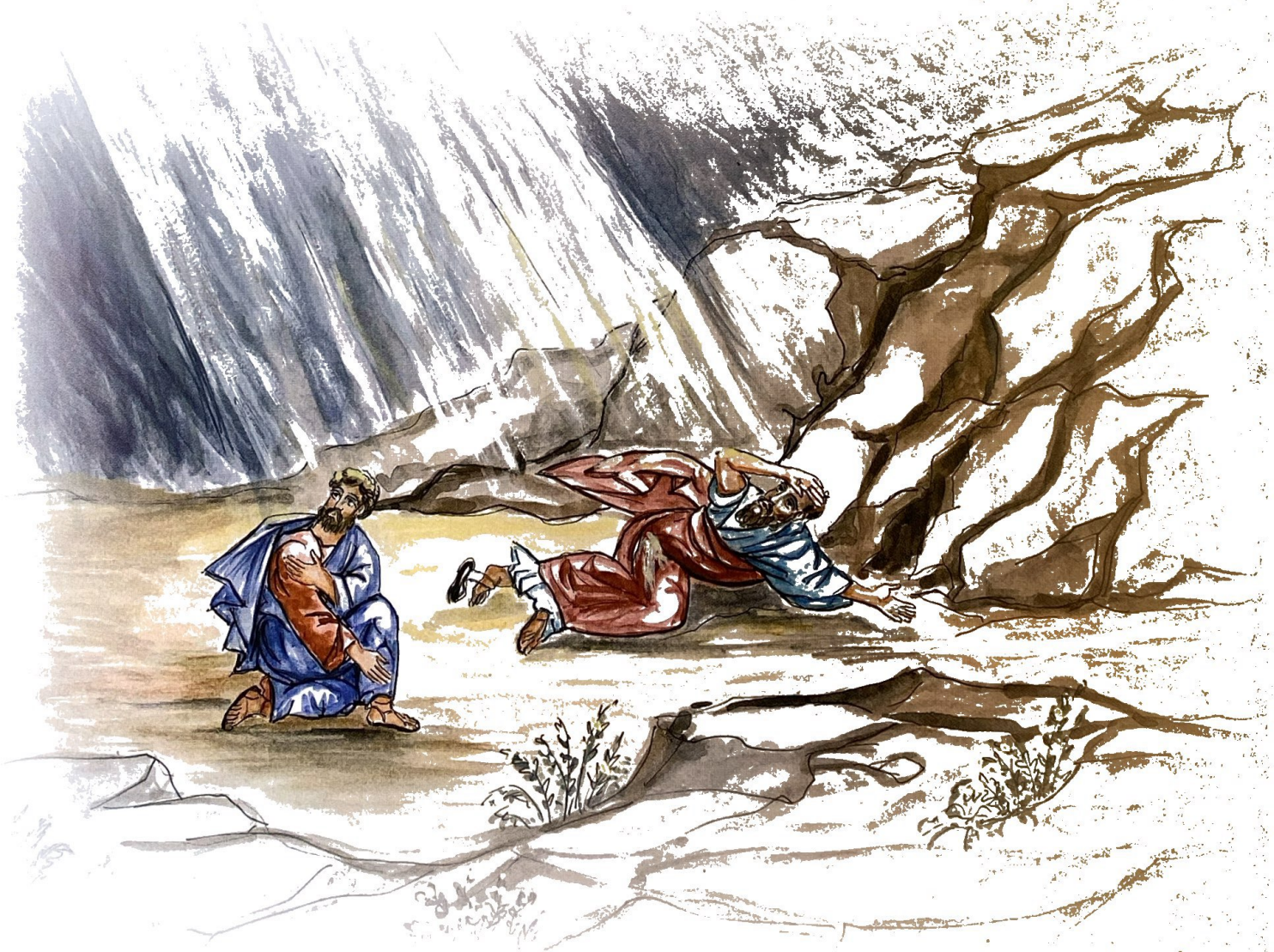




One of those who tried to hurt the Church was Saul. He was there when the people threw stones at Stephen and killed him. He wanted to destroy everyone who believed in Jesus. He broke down the doors of houses, dragged away men and women who were members of the Church, and threw them in prison.

Because of this the disciples, both men and women, left Jerusalem and were scattered all over the place. But everywhere they went, they continued to preach about Jesus.

(Acts 6-8)



Saul goes to Damascus

Saul heard that many people in Damascus believed in Jesus, so he went to the chief priest and said, "I want to go to Damascus. Give me permission to arrest everyone there who believes in Jesus and bring them back." The chief priest gave him permission, and Saul started out for Damascus. When he was near the city, a bright light from heaven flashed around him. He fell on the ground and heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. Then the voice answered, "I am Jesus, Whom you persecute. Get up and go into the city. There you will be told what to do."

The men who were travelling along with Saul were speechless, because they heard the voice too, but they could not see anyone. Saul got up but he could not see at all even though his eyes were open. The men with him led him to Damascus by the hand, and Saul was blind for three days and did not eat or drink.





Ananias helps Saul

A disciple of Jesus named Ananias lived in Damascus. The Lord appeared to him in a vision and told him, "Get up and go to the house of Judas on the street that is called Straight. Ask there for somebody named Saul. He is there praying."

Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard many people saying that this man has caused many problems for the believers in Jerusalem. He persecutes all who believe in You and puts them in prison."

But the Lord said, "Go, because I have chosen him to make Me known to all nations and to kings and to the Jewish people." So Ananias went to Saul. He laid his hands on Saul and said, "Saul, my brother, the Lord Jesus sent me to help you see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Something like fish scales fell from his eyes at once and he could see again. He got up and was baptized. Then he ate and felt much better.

(Acts 9)

Saul preaches about Jesus

For several days Saul went to the synagogues where the Jews were praying. There he started preaching that Jesus was the Son of God and that He is risen from the dead and is alive. All those who heard this were confused and said, "Isn't he the one who was persecuting those who believe in Jesus? This is why he is here, isn't it? To arrest them and take them to the chief priests?"



Paul travels to Greece

While Paul and his fellow disciples were preaching in the towns of Asia Minor, he had a vision one night: a Macedonian man asked him to preach the gospel in Macedonia. So they sailed to Macedonia from Troas and reached Philippi, the most important city in that region. On the Sabbath they went out of the city to a place by the river where the Jewish people from Philippi used to gather to pray. Paul started talking to the women who were gathered there.

Among them there was a woman named Lydia, and she listened very carefully to what Paul said about Jesus. Lydia believed and she and her whole family were baptized. In fact, she begged Paul and the Christians with him to come and stay at her house.

(Acts 16)

Paul casts out an evil spirit

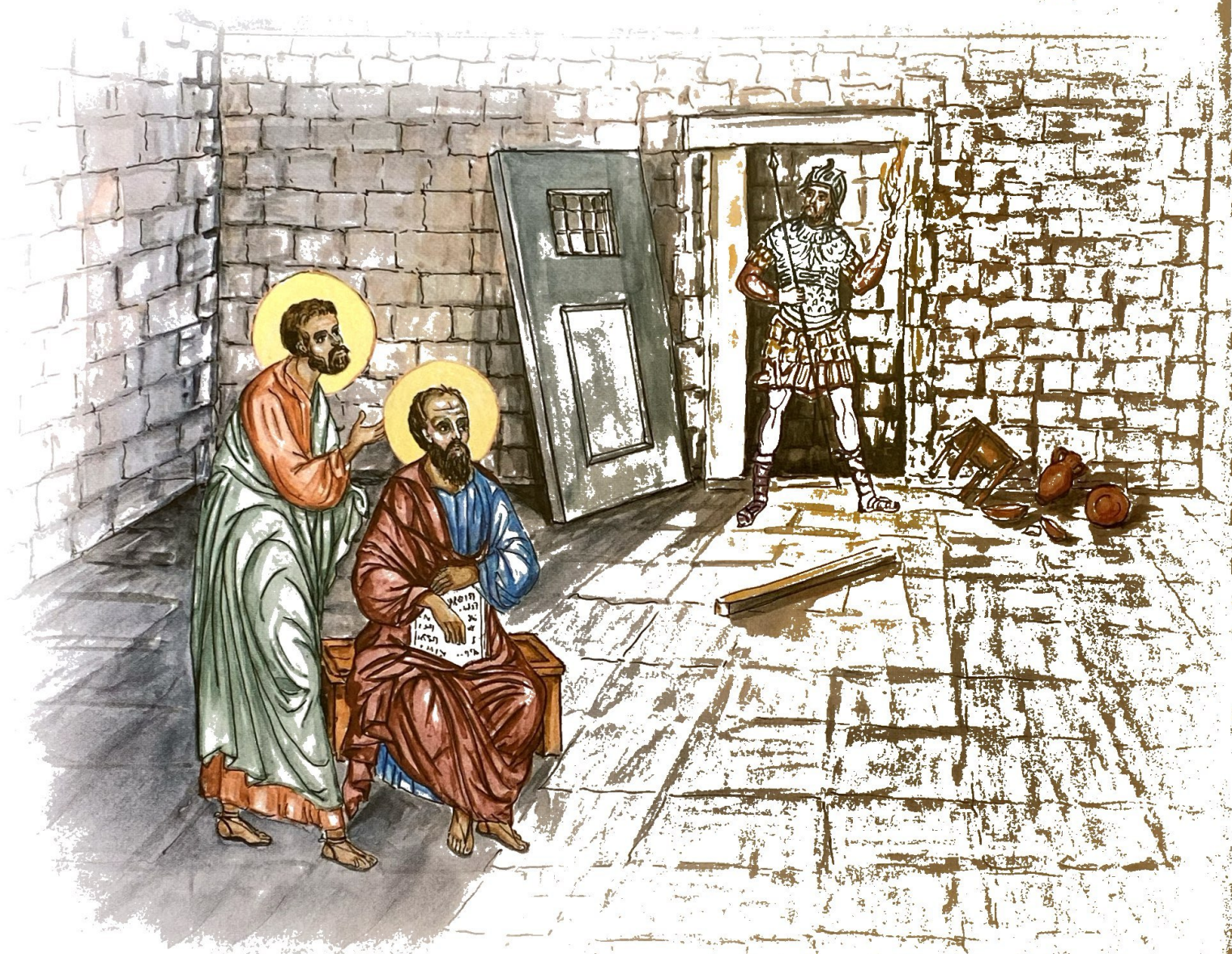
Paul and the others often went to the place of prayer in Philippi. One day they met a slave girl who was possessed by an evil spirit, a spirit that used her voice to speak and could tell the future. Because she could do this, her masters earned a lot of money. She kept following Paul and his helpers, shouting, "These men serve the most high God, and they will teach you how to be saved!"

She did this for several days, until finally Paul could not stand it any more. He turned back and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." The spirit came out at once, but without the evil spirit the slave girl could no longer tell the future.

Her masters got very angry because they could not earn any more money from her. So they had Paul and his fellow worker Silas arrested, and brought them before the city judges and said, "These people are upsetting the city. They want to teach new customs which are against our laws." The judges tore the clothes off Paul and Silas and gave orders that they were to be beaten. After they beat them severely they threw Paul and Silas into prison.

(Acts 16)





Paul and Silas in jail

The judges commanded the jailer to guard them securely, so he put them deep inside the jail and tied their feet to heavy blocks of wood.

It was close to midnight, and Paul and Silas were praying and singing praises to God. The other prisoners were listening to them when suddenly there was a strong earthquake. The jail's foundations shook, and all of the cells were opened and the chains of the prisoners fell off.

At this, the jailer woke up. When he saw that the jail cells were all open, he took out his sword and prepared to kill himself, because he thought that all the prisoners had escaped.

Then Paul shouted loudly, "Don't harm yourself, we are all here!" The jailer called for lights to be brought and ran to the cell, and fell on his knees in fear before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out of the building and asked, "My lords, what must I do to be saved?" and they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you and your family will be saved." And they talked to him and to all the others about Christ.

The jailer washed their wounds and then he and his family were baptized. Then he took them to his house and fed them, because he was happy that he and his family had found faith in God.

The next day Paul and Silas were set free because the judges realized that they were wrong. They apologized to Paul and Silas for the injustice they had done to them. After this, Paul and Silas continued on their journey.

(Acts 16)



Paul travels from place to place

Paul and his fellow workers travelled from place to place. Everywhere they went, they visited the synagogues and the public places, preaching about Jesus Christ.

Many people listened to Paul carefully when he spoke to them, because he knew how to explain the Scriptures about Christ and His Resurrection. But not everyone liked Paul's teaching that Jesus was the Son of God. He was often beaten and sent away from these places.

But many of the men and women who met Paul and were persuaded by his words believed in Christ and were baptized. Before long, many Christian communities had been formed in several places.

(Acts 17)

Paul comes to Athens

Paul left behind his fellow workers, Timothy and Silas, and traveled on ahead to Athens. While he waited for them to arrive, he wandered about the city and was sad to notice that the city was full of idols made of stone, silver, or gold. People in this town were praying to the idols, hoping that their many gods would help them.

Paul hoped to teach the people of Athens that there is only one living God, the only One who could help them. So he went every day to the marketplace and spoke about Jesus.

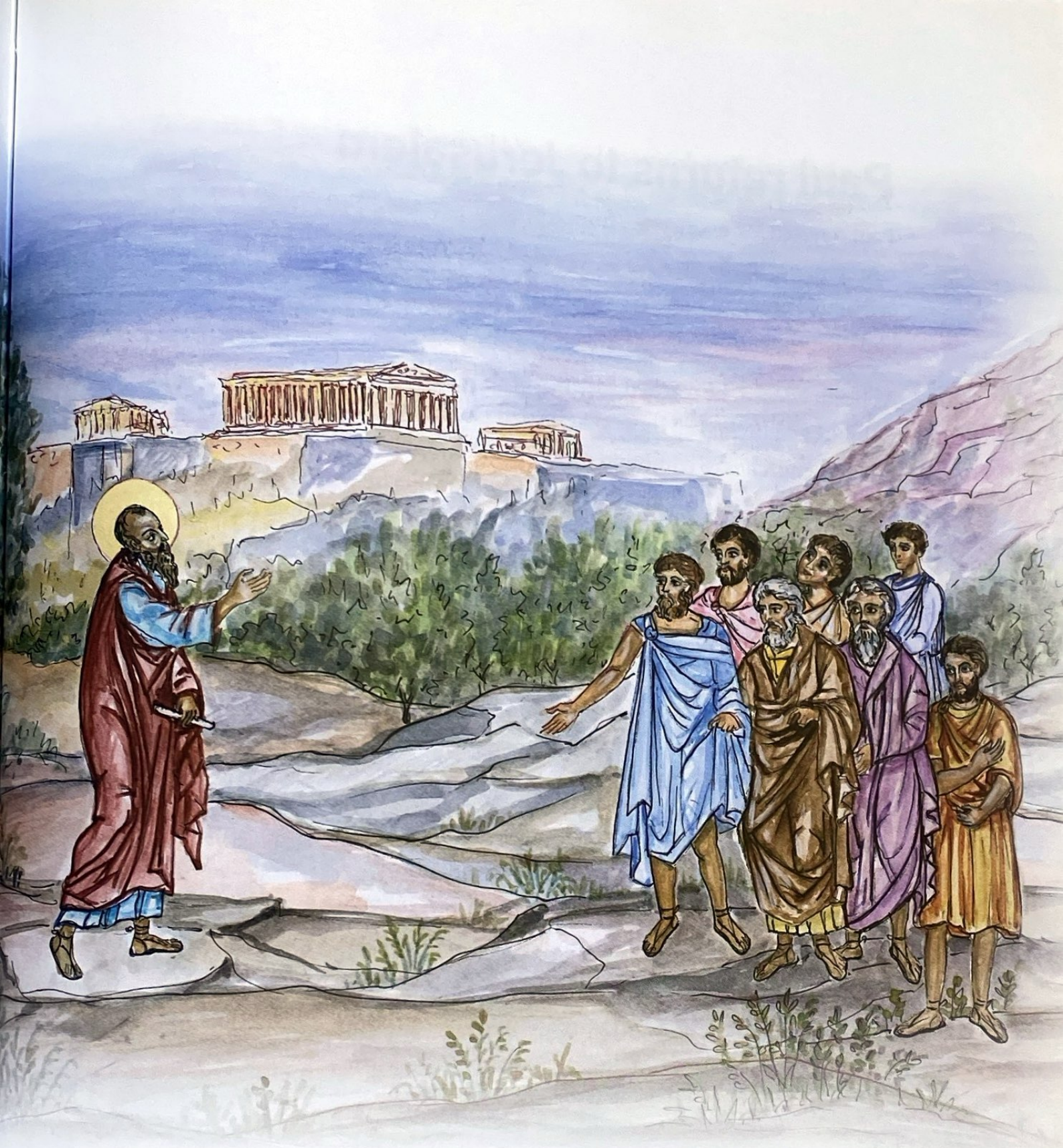
Some of the philosophers said, "What is this storyteller trying to say?" Others listened to him preaching about Jesus and His Resurrection and said, "It seems that he is talking about some foreign gods." The Athenians wanted only to talk about new and interesting things, so much so that there was a place called the Areopagus set aside for listening to those who had new ideas to share. So the Athenians took Paul to this place and said, "Tell us about this new idea you preach. You bring strange things

to our ears. We want to hear what this is about.” Then Paul stood in the middle of the Areopagus and said, “People of Athens! I see that you are religious in every way. In fact, as I wandered about your city and saw your many sacred places, I found among them an altar with the inscription, ‘To the Unknown God.’ The one Whom you adore without knowing, I am here to make known to you. He is the God who created the world and everything that is in it. He is the Lord of heaven and earth. He does not live in temples made by human hands, and human hands do not serve Him as if He should have need of anything, since He is the one who gives life and breath to everything. You must not think that God is something that looks like gold or silver or stone, or a sculptured piece of art, or something from human imagination.”

Then he told them about the faith in Jesus Christ, a faith that is based on His Resurrection. But as soon as they heard about the idea of resurrection of the dead, some people made fun of him and said, “Tell us about it another time.” Then Paul left, but some of them followed him and became Christians. Among them were Dionysios of Areopagus and a woman called Damaris. This was the beginning of the first Church in Athens.

(Acts 17)





Paul returns to Jerusalem

Paul traveled for many years from town to town and from country to country. Finally, he decided to return to Jerusalem because he wanted to celebrate Pentecost together with the other disciples. But he knew that he had many enemies in Jerusalem.

As he journeyed, he reached Miletus, and from there he sent messages to Ephesus and invited all those that he had taught and were now responsible for local churches to come and meet him. Paul spoke with them for a long time, because he knew that it was the last time he would see them.



So he said, "Keep in your heart all I have said to you about Jesus Christ. God will be with you and He will protect you. Remember this because it is important: take care of the poor and the weak, as Jesus Christ did. Remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, who said, 'It is better to give than to receive'."

When he said these words, he and all the others knelt and prayed. Then many of them wept, and they hugged and kissed him. They were sad because he was saying goodbye. After that they accompanied him to his ship.

(Acts 20)

Paul is arrested

When Paul arrived in Jerusalem, he went to the temple. Some of the Jews recognized him and shouted, "This is the man who is teaching everywhere against Moses' law and also against this temple."

Then a large crowd gathered, and they seized Paul and brought him out of the temple and began to beat him. The crowd wanted to kill him. But the commander of the Roman army heard that there was trouble in the city, so he took some soldiers and officers to where the crowd was. When the crowd saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.

Then the commander came and arrested him and ordered him to be bound in chains. Then he asked who he was and what he had done wrong. The crowd shouted with such confusion and noise that the commander could not understand anything, so he gave orders to put Paul in jail.

(Acts 21)

The trip to Rome

Paul remained in jail for many years. The Roman governor would not set him free because he wanted to make good impression on the Jewish leaders.

Then a new governor, Festus, was appointed. He asked Paul, "Do you want to have a trial in Jerusalem so that your case will be closed at last?" Paul answered, "I am innocent. I ask to plead my case to the emperor. I appeal to Caesar." Paul said this because he had all the rights of a citizen of Rome. Every Roman citizen had the right to ask that his case be heard by the emperor, so Festus had to agree.

Paul, together with many other prisoners and their guards, was sent on the long trip across the Mediterranean Sea to Rome, and it was a very difficult journey.

The captain of the ship decided to look for a calm harbor to spend the winter. But a strong wind blew up and struck the ship, throwing it this way and that. For several days the sun and the stars could not be seen, and everyone was afraid that the ship would sink and kill them all.





But Paul said, “Do not lose your courage. No one will drown, but the ship will be destroyed. Last night an angel of God appeared to me and said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul! God will save you all.’ I trust God and I believe in what the angel promised. We will go ashore on an island.”

It happened just as Paul said. For fourteen days the ship was adrift, until at last they saw land. They spotted a bay with a beach and decided to anchor the ship, but before they could manage this, the ship ran aground on a sandbar. The bow of the ship was stuck in the sand, but the stern was smashed and broken into pieces by the pounding waves. Everyone jumped overboard, and those who could swim headed for the beach while the others floated in on pieces of wood or other parts of the ship. In this way everyone was saved.

The island where they came ashore was named Malta, and they remained there through the winter until they could continue their journey.

When they finally reached Rome, Paul stayed in a private house guarded by a soldier. He was a prisoner but he was allowed to have visitors. Paul preached about Jesus Christ to everyone who came to visit him.

(Acts 24-28)



Paul writes many letters

Paul established Christian communities in every place he visited. All these Christians asked for advice and help. He could not travel all the time and visit them continually, so he wrote letters. In these letters, he explained to the members of the new churches the importance of Christ. Paul also gave them advice about how to live their lives. Paul's letters were read in front of everybody whenever the Christians of a city gathered together to pray and to worship God.

Other disciples of Jesus Christ wrote letters to Christian communities as well.

Paul wrote to the church of Corinth:

My brothers and sisters, I know that all of you want to serve God. The Holy Spirit has given gifts to all of you for everyone's advantage. To one He gives the gift to speak with divine wisdom, to another He gives exceptional power of faith. To one He gives the power to work miracles, to another the power to heal sickness. All these gifts come from God. They are different, but each one is very important.

The Christian community is like the human body: the body is one unit, but it is made of many parts. The leg is different from the hand, and the eye is different from the ear. But they belong to the same body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," and the head cannot say to the legs, "I do not need you." All the parts of the body are important and none of them is useless.

The Christian community is like this, too. All of you together form the body of Christ, and you are part of Him, each one of you separately.

(1 Corinthians 12)

John wrote:

My beloved, let us love one another, because love comes from God. This is how the love of God is shown to us: He sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to the world to give us new life. He showed us how we can approach God.

My beloved, if God has loved us, we must love each other, too. No one has seen God until now. If we love one another, we are in fellowship with God and His love is complete in us.

If someone says, "I love God," but he hates his brother, he is a liar. Because how can he love God, whom he cannot see, and hate his brother whom he can see? Is this the commandment God gave us? He who loves God must love his brother, too.

(1 John 4)



God's new world

More and more people came to believe in Jesus Christ every day. But the Christians had many enemies. The Roman emperor gave orders to imprison everyone who said, "I believe in Jesus Christ." This is what happened with John, Christ's disciple. He was arrested and exiled on the island of Patmos and could not leave. While he was there, God showed him what was going to happen in the days to come and when Jesus returned. John wrote down everything God had revealed to him:

I saw a huge crowd of people, so large that nobody could count them all. They were from every nation of the earth. They were standing in front of God's throne in heaven, and they were dressed in white robes and held palm branches in their hands.

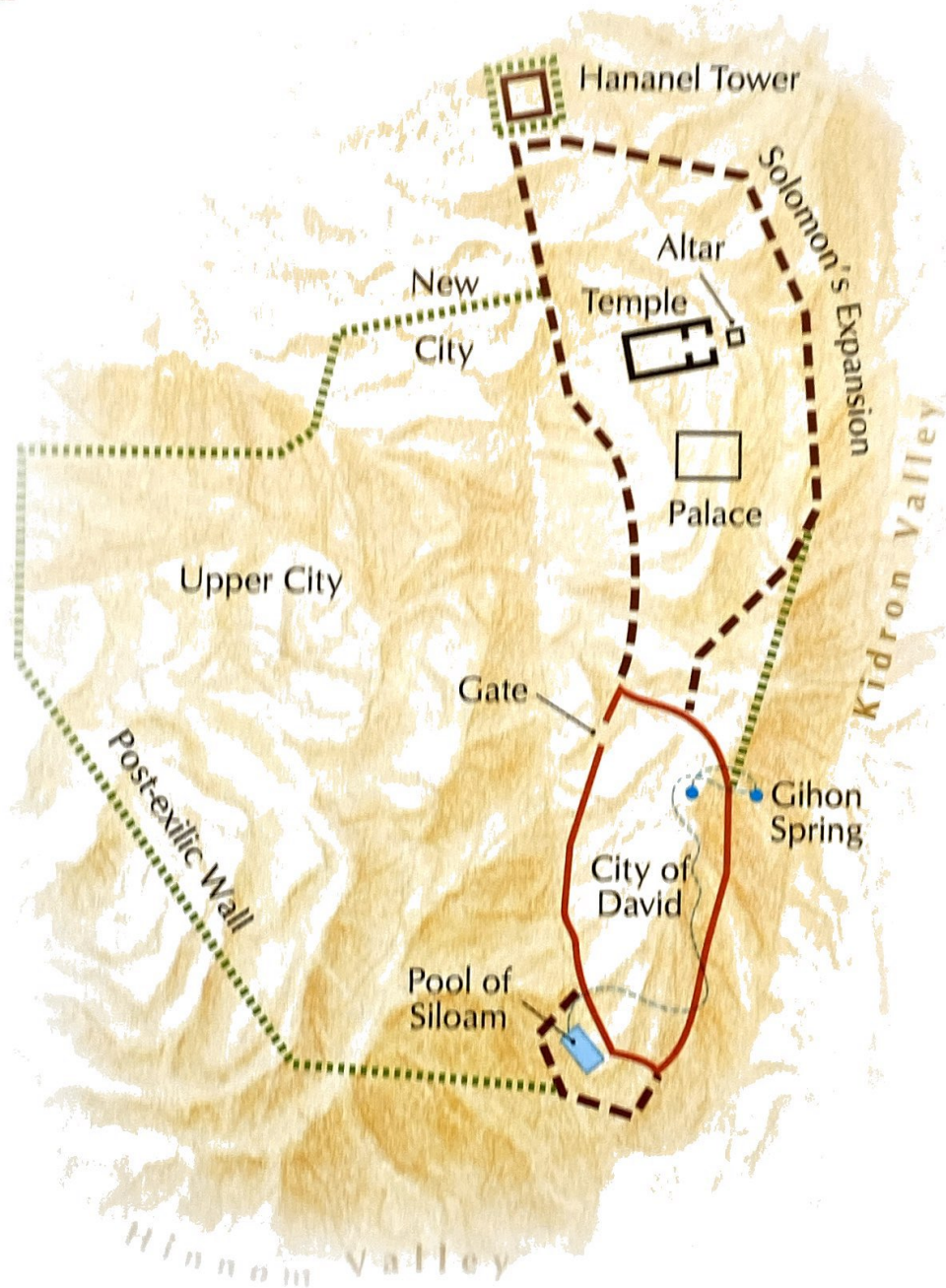
All the angels stood around the throne, praising God saying, "Truly praise, glory, wisdom, thanks, honor, power and strength belong to our God forever. Amen."

Someone explained, "These people have endured great persecution. They have suffered greatly. They are here because they have undergone so much for Christ's sake. They stand in front of God's throne and they worship Him day and night. They will never be hungry or thirsty again. They will never suffer from the sun or scorching heat. Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, will guide them and lead them to the fountain of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

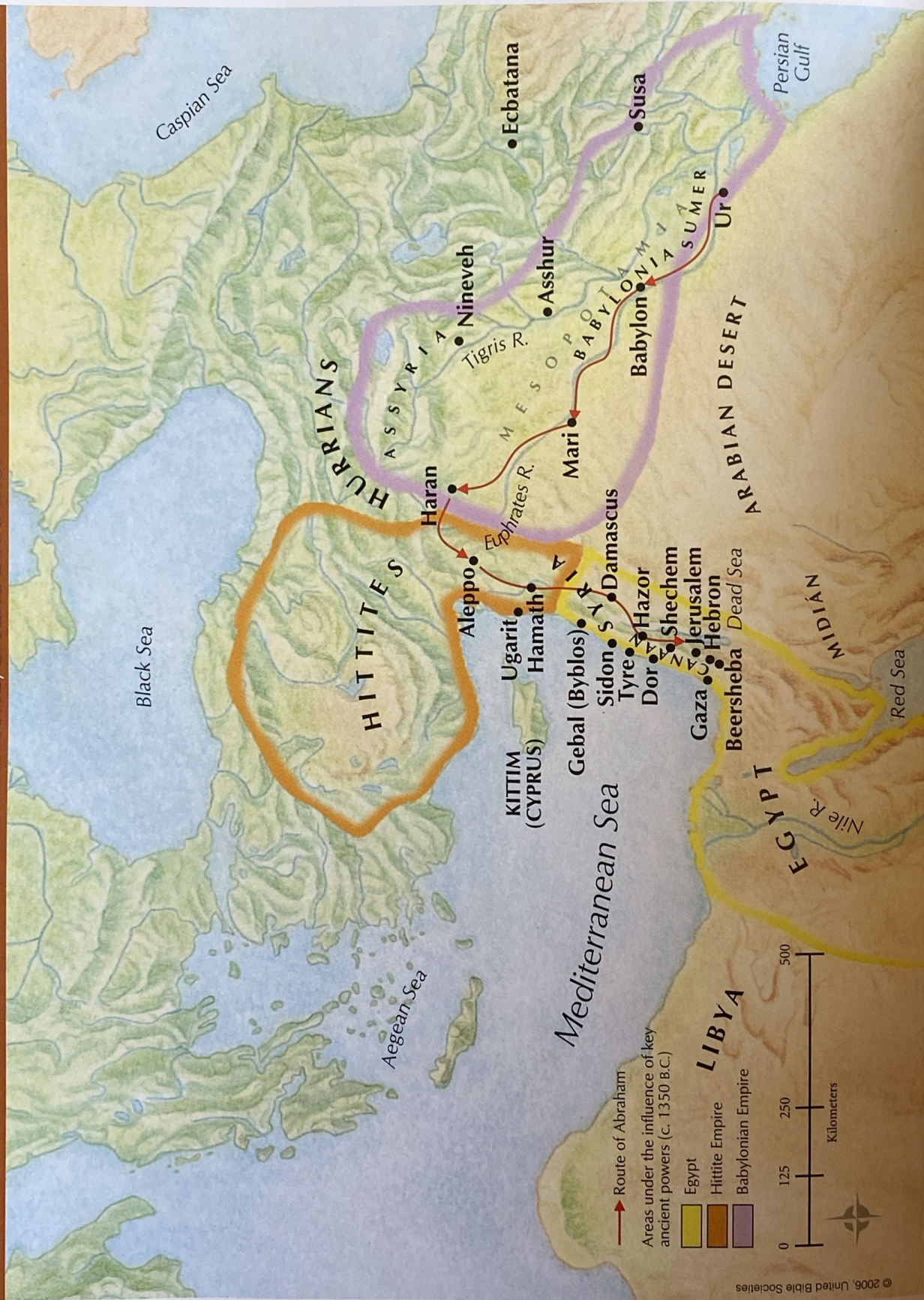
(Revelation 7)



Maps



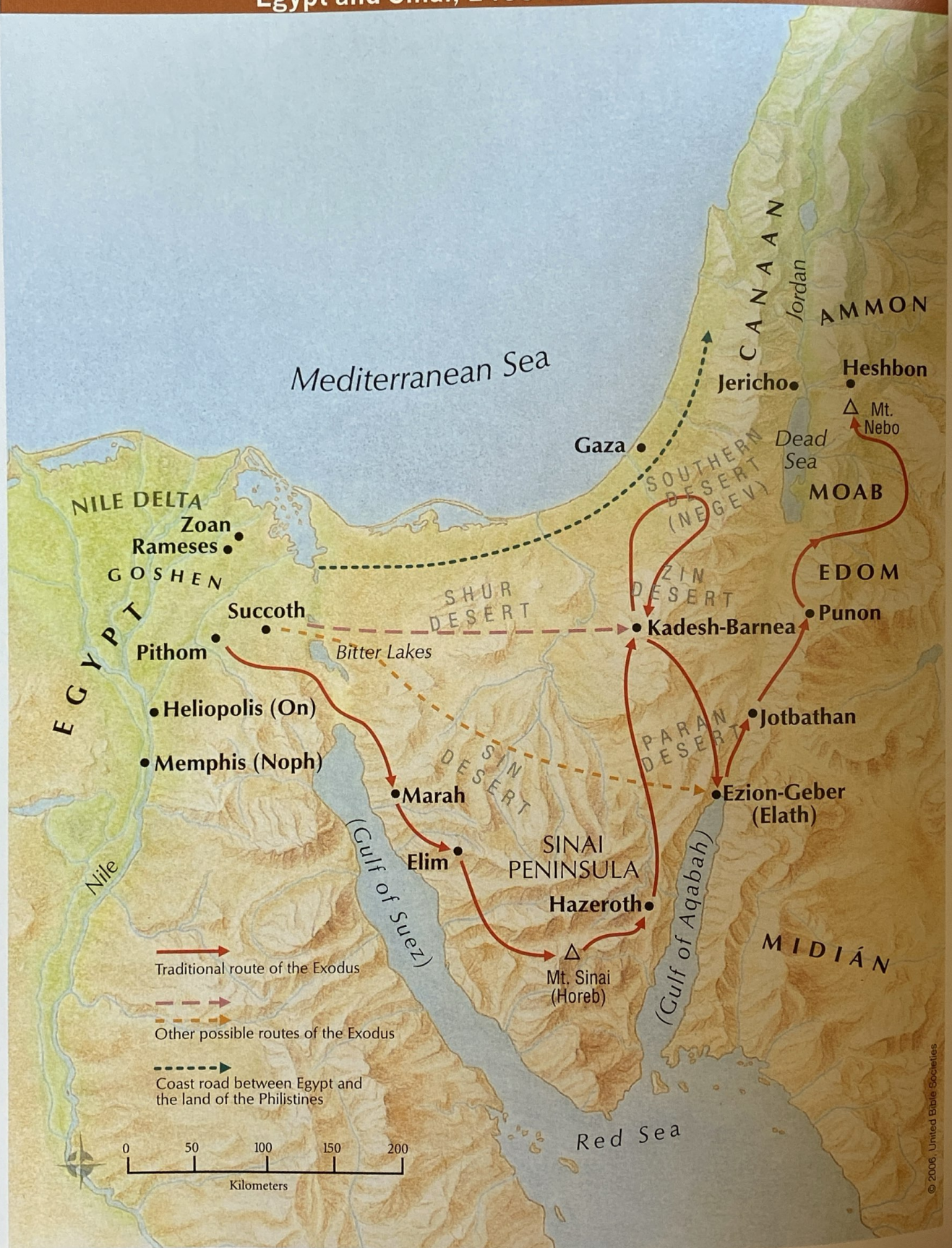
Ancient World, around 1350 B.C.



Assyrian Empire



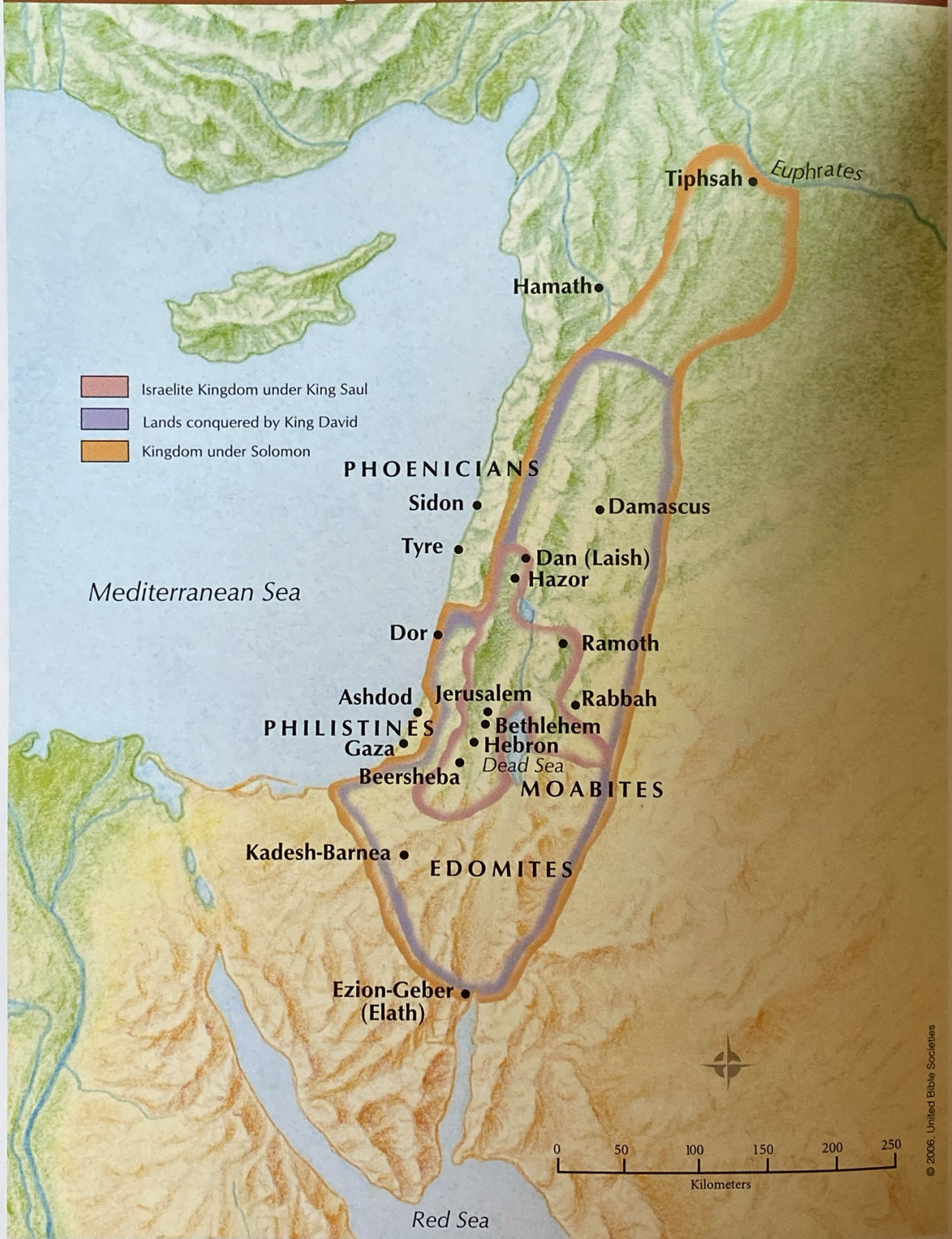
Egypt and Sinai, 1400 to 1200 B.C.



Division of Canaan, 1200 to 1030 B.C.



Israel in the Time of Kings Saul, David, and Solomon, 1000 to 924 B.C.



The Kingdoms of Israel and Judah, 924 to 722 B.C.



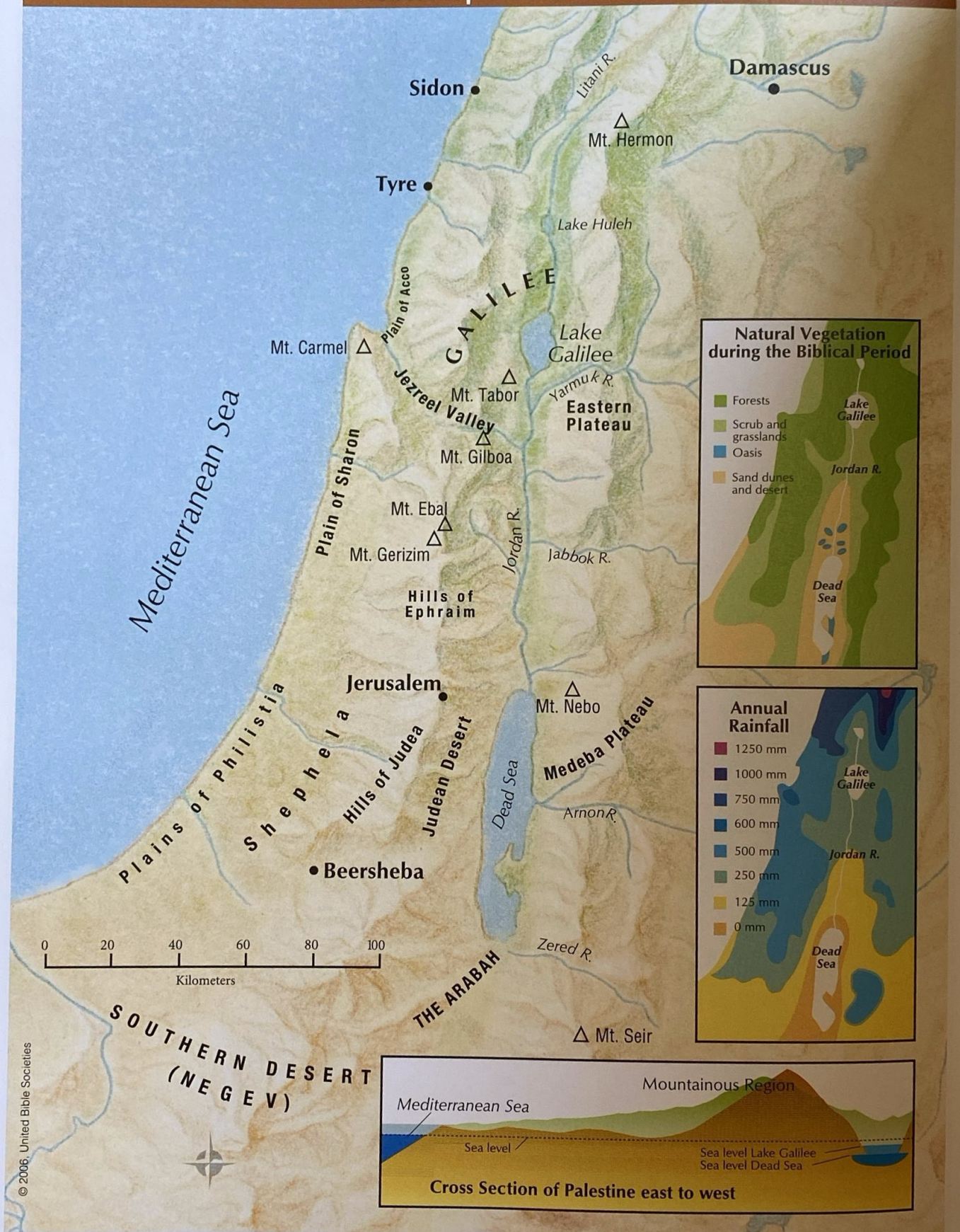
The Ancient Near East, 6th to 3rd Centuries B.C.



Roman Empire, around 27 B.C.



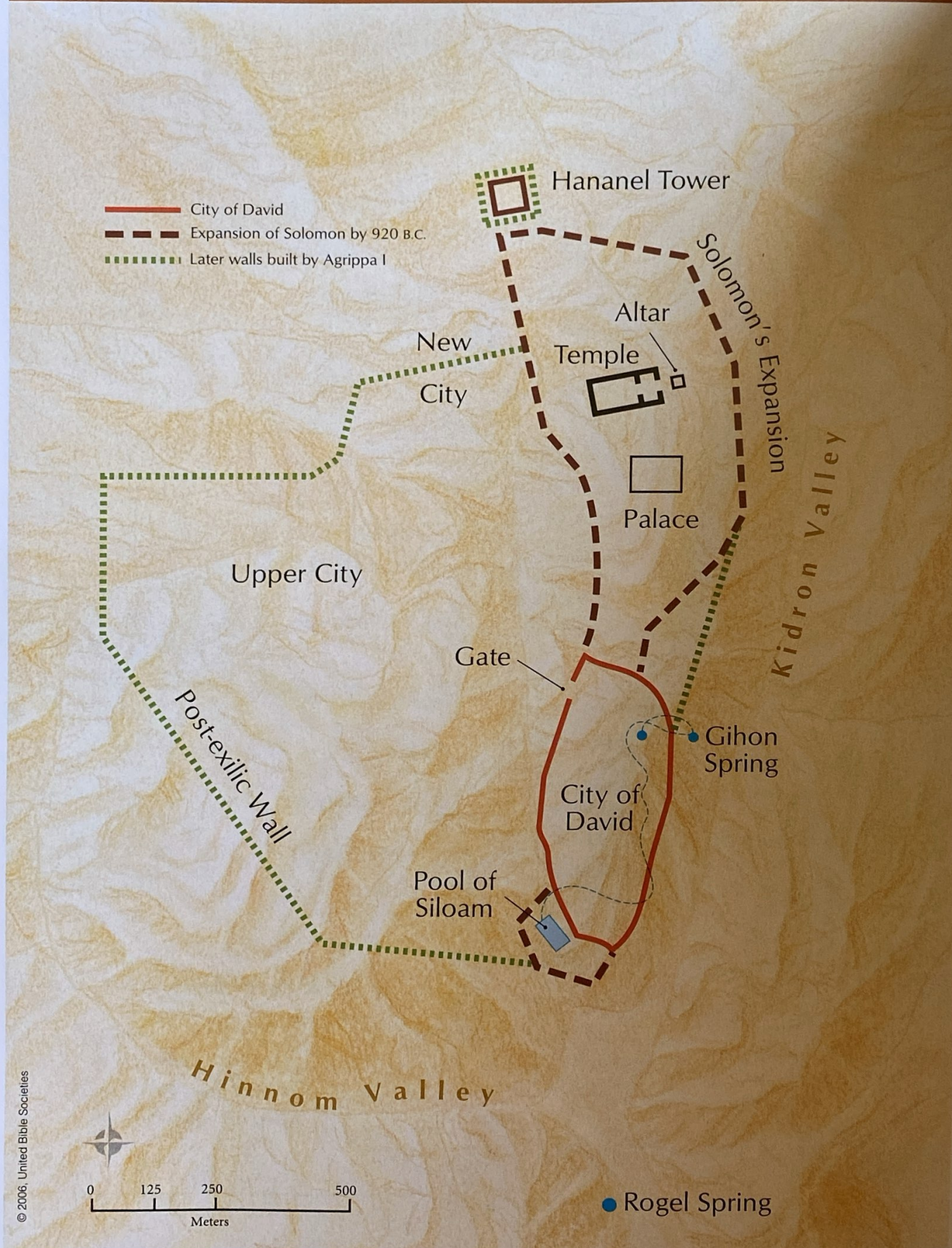
Relief Map of Palestine



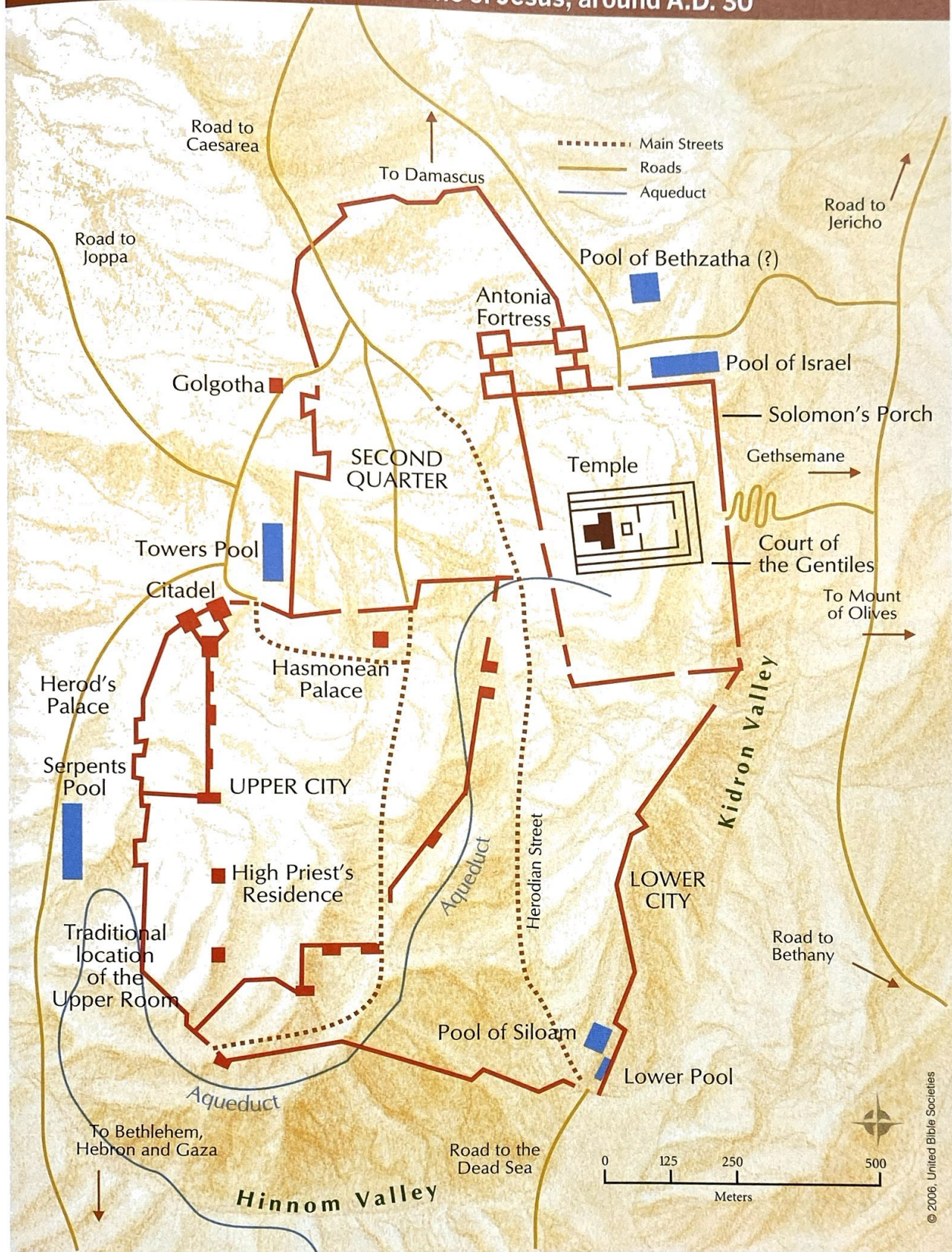
Palestine Under the Herods, 4 B.C. to A.D. 44



Jerusalem in Old Testament Times, 960 to 44 B.C.



Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus, around A.D. 30



Paul's First Journey



Paul's Second Journey



Paul's Third Journey



Paul's Journey to Rome





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